

THE EVOLUTION AND FORM OF DOCUMENTARY THEATRE:

ROLF HOCHHUTH, HEINAR KIPPHARDT, PETER WEISS

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of Drama

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Susan Dianne Speers

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S.D.S.

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In the 1920's, two young Germans, Erwin Piscator (1893-1966), a director, and Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), a playwright, dissatisfied with the limited scope of Realism and with the subjectivity of Expressionism, laid the groundwork for a theatre of political and social ideas, a didactic theatre, to which they applied the term 'Epic' in order to denote its broad canvas and its narrative character. In the Epic form, dramatic emphasis shifted from the character to the event, from the individual to society as a whole. At the time, although Piscator was insisting that the theatre become a tribunal, he had difficulty in finding suitable plays. It was not until 1962, after the war and his exile of eighteen years, that Piscator was able to direct plays of the type he had been seeking since the 'twenties. When he was given the direction of the Freie Volksbuehne of Berlin (1962), he presented three new works by three new authors: The Deputy by Rolf Hochhuth in 1963, In The Matter Of J. Robert Oppenheimer by Heinar Kipphardt in 1964, and The Investigation by Peter Weiss in 1965. These dramas in which political consciousness is wedded to highly documentary modes of production represent a new genre, Documentary Theatre.

In this thesis, I propose to examine the evolution and form of Documentary Theatre in West Germany and to conduct an analysis of selected dramatic works of Hochhuth, Kipphardt, and Weiss in light of this political genre.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT TITLE PAGE	iv
ABSTRACT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
CHAPTER	
I. THE POLITICAL THEATRE OF ERWIN PISCATOR	1
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER I	40
II. DOCUMENTARY DRAMA DEFINED	47
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER II.	72
III. DOCUMENTARY DRAMA EXEMPLIFIED	74
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER III	119
IV. DOCUMENTARY DRAMA <u>IN TOTO</u>	123
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER IV.	130
BIBLIOGRAPHY	132

CHAPTER I: THE POLITICAL THEATRE OF ERWIN PISCATOR

Political Theatre

The relationship between theatre and politics has been periodically tense for two and a half thousand years. Aristophanes campaigned from the stage against the demagogues and the advocates of the Peloponnesian War. Medieval Interludes developed from edifying entertainments into propaganda vehicles for the Protestants and Catholic alike. Industrialization caused a drama of class consciousness during the Realistic/Naturalistic movement of the nineteenth-century as well as the bourgeois drama of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century. This century has seen the upheaval of World War I give birth to a politically didactic theatre in Russia and Germany which spread through Europe and the United States in the wake of the economic depression of the 1930's and has been sustained by the political aftereffects of World War II. As long as the theatre is used for politically didactic purposes, choices will be made concerning the subject matter and the way it is presented. There in lies the controversy of polemic theatre.

Post-World War I Germany

Political theatre in twentieth-century Germany seems inevitable. Since Lessing,¹ German literature has had the cultural purpose of unifying the country by spreading common moral and social standards, and, according to Innes,² the theatre in particular is approached as an educational institution. The influence of the stage as a moral tribunal has established drama as the primary artistic means of social criticism, as acknowledged from the time of Goethe and Schiller.³

The theatre is therefore taken quite seriously by the German public. In addition to escapist entertainment, much of the drama has become an outlet for social criticism.

As World War I came to its final phase and the social order of the defeated lands - Russia, followed by the German Alliance - deteriorated, the necessity for finding new artistic methods became evident. The artistic traditions of the Classics and conventional comedies ignored reality and disguised the brutalization of the individual, thus appearing hypocritical to a society having recently survived warfare experiences (p. 3, ns. 8 and 9). Industrialization and military machinery had created the power of mass-destruction and the headlong wastage of men and materials brought forth a brutal image of the mechanization of modern life. It was the inadequacy of traditional artistic responses that led to the violent and impermanent stylistic revolutions of Dada, Futurism, and Expressionism.⁴ Although these movements in theatre reflected the economic and social chaos of the Weimar Republic, they were of aggressive modernity and took novelty and originality as their criteria, seldom seeking out causes of proposed solutions. Their productions reflected highly subjective viewpoints, with "no story in the stream-of-consciousness pattern."⁵ Expressionist Georg Kaiser's very definition of drama, "thinking a thought through to its conclusion,"⁶ was belied by Expressionistic plays. Thus a society that traditionally looked to its theatre for some sense of direction found, instead of order and identity, the chaotic subjectiveness of the experimental movements or traditional illusionistic pieces that were totally inadequate considering the expansion of the viewers' horizons.⁷

One of the reasons the German artists were unable to fulfill the society's need for direction was their own sense of confusion due to their personal involvement in trench warfare. Having served in the ranks, they became sensitive to the lack of responsibility of their chosen profession. A young actor describing his first contact as a soldier with the reality of war recalls:

Before all those exploding grenades my idea of the theatre, which had been for me the highest and most important goal I could strive for, seemed so stupid, so ridiculous, so false and so inadequate to the situation I was in, that I was less afraid of the grenades coming toward me than I was ashamed of having chosen such a profession.

The young actor was Erwin Piscator, a man who went on to lay the groundwork for a theatre of political and social ideas, a didactic theatre, with theatrical innovations that affected every aspect of the modern theatre:

We had to tear away the fourth wall and form a tie between theatre and life, a relation between drama and reality. ...I wanted to revive the theatre as a school of morals in the sense intended by Diderot and Schiller, and at the same time evoke in a living manner the great problems of our age.

Overshadowed by his contemporary Brecht, Piscator has been generally neglected, but his work provided models and standards for all polemic theatre, forming the distinctive elements of Epic drama and influencing his German contemporaries, the English and French theatre, as well as the American Living Newspaper. His career bridges the whole period from 1913 to the plays of Hochhuth, Weiss and Kipphardt in the 1960's, and he is responsible for the major modern stage-forms of Epic theatre, 'Total Theatre' and Documentary Drama.

Erwin Piscator

Born at Marburg, Germany in 1893, Piscator began his theatre career in 1913 as an actor in minor roles at the Munich Hoftheatre. Serving as a foot-soldier in World War I from 1915 to 1918, an experience that made him an ardent pacifist, he also served as director of the military Front Theatre and performed stock parts in popular comedies until he was demobilized. It was during the war that his illusion of theatrical romantics was shattered forever, and that "the curtain separating life from stage was torn away."¹⁰

Following the war he founded the Tribunal Theatre in Königsberg (1919-1920), an avant-garde theatre, and directed plays by Strindberg, Wedekind, Sternheim, and the works of Ernst Toller and Georg Kaiser in progress. Visiting in Berlin in 1919, Wieland Herzfelde, a friend with whom he had acted during the war, introduced him to John Heartfield,¹¹ George Grosz, Walter Mehring and others who formed the Marxist core of the Dada movement and were later to collaborate with him in his artistic endeavors. The extent of Piscator's debt to Dada can be shown through an examination of the theatrical techniques used by Yvan Goll, one of the leading Expressionists who was also part of the Dada movement. In 1918 Goll had written of the necessity of creating a "superdrama"¹² by using "all technological props"¹³ to create effective images of contemporary life. In his 1920 production of The Immortals, Goll used projections of "newspaper, ballad-singer's verses, photography: highly active mechanisms, poster,"¹⁴ as Piscator was to do in his later productions. He advocated the use of exaggerated masks which distorted

physical characteristics, a device Piscator, with the help of George Grosz, used in The Good Soldier Schweik. But more important than the incidental stage effects was the Dadaists' stress on active involvement and authenticity, confirming Piscator's conviction that art should be more than amusement. The following Dadaist manifesto, written in 1918 by Tzara, forms the basis of immediacy reflected in Piscator's earlier productions:

Art is dependent for its execution and direction on the age in which it lives, ...the highest art will be that which presents the thousandfold problems of the times in its conscious content and which reveals that it allowed itself to be marked by the explosions of last week, which continually has to gather its elements together again after the blows of the last few days.¹⁵

During this time, when political extremism was popular, the Dadaists also introduced Piscator to Marxism. Their doctrine stressed the only possible function of the theatre was to stir the proletarian audience to right the wrongs perpetrated by a decadent capitalism. Piscator joined the Communist Party and began advocating the creation of Proletarian Theatre for the workers of Berlin. In 1920 he moved permanently to Berlin and started his own Proletarian Theatre, supporting the Marxist doctrine of a classless and stateless society. Looking back on the period in his autobiography, The Political Theatre (1929), Piscator comments:

We discussed the problems of art till we were out of breath, and always from a political angle. We realized in doing so, that art could not be art, could not be of any value unless it were merely one means amongst others in the class struggle.

We banished the word 'art' from our programme in a radical manner; our 'plays' were as many manifestos thanks to which we sought to intervene in the events of the day and to exert a political influence.¹⁶

With these goals in mind, Piscator soon found his way from Expressionism into the Agitprop¹⁷ movement.

"Although the general concept of Russian Agitprop was known in Europe, there was little opportunity of seeing a performance or learning about the practical details of production."¹⁸ Piscator was, as initiator of the Agitprop movement in Germany, breaking new ground in his Proletarian Theatre. Performing the plays in workers' beer-halls, he felt that "theatre can be played anywhere, in a marketplace, in a subway station, as long as there is an audience."¹⁹ He went back to the limited facilities of primitive drama, playing without a formal stage, costumes or lighting, in the meeting and beer-halls of industrial districts, and relying on amateur, working-class actors. The short scripts he produced under such conditions, designed to make an immediate propaganda impact, formed the basis of his later work, as did the direct-contact relationship formed between the actors and the audience. Unfortunately, his primary requirement for theatre, the audience, was not always appreciative:

- The man in his shirt sleeves and the woman holding her baby in her arms were not interested in seeing their own image in the mirror held out to them from the stage, nor in any lesson they could learn from history. ... They were not ready to be educated by or through the theatre. The dry, anti-romantic approach, the primitive decors, the underplaying actors, the dialects they could not grasp, failed to create the success that Piscator had hoped for. The proletarians did not care for the Proletarian Theatre.²⁰

When the Berlin police department failed to renew their license, the Proletarian Theatre closed, April, 1921. However, Piscator had acquired valuable knowledge and a small following of four or five thousand members.²¹

To continue his work he bought the Central Theatre in 1922 and, in order to attract new members and equity, he abandoned his avant-garde position for a more popular, conservative bill. "No theatre, not even mine, could dispense with the attraction of the bourgeois as an audience [Piscator's italics], if it did not want to pass away unnoticed in some quite corner due to a lack of fame and finances."²² Since the drama in general had "reverted to a new realism, known as Neue Sachlichkeit, which was suffused with a sense of disillusionment and sober recognition of fact,"²³ Piscator tried the darker extremes of Naturalism with such productions as Gorky's Small Citizen and Tolstoy's The Power of Darkness. After only three productions he sold his theatre, this time due to an actors strike in the fall of 1924, but he had gained experience with the conventional apparatus of the stage and had established himself as a vital, young director.

Epic Theatre

The Berlin Volksbuehne offered Piscator a position as a free-lance director that year (1924) and he started to develop "the principles of fluidity, simultaneity and cinematic cutting to the topical historical, factual material"²⁴ that was to become known as 'Epic' theatre. His first production for the Volksbuehne, Flags by Alfons Paquet, was from a documentary-style dramatic novel, subtitled Epic by its author. In the production Piscator used projected photographs and titles between each scene as an explanation of plot, a narrative device that was to become one of the characteristics of the new Epic form. Other characteristics of this genre include: themes of political and social nature that attempts

to reach all people; an invitation to learning, conscious that it must lead to communication; rejection of the naturalistic form and the Aristotelian unities of time, place and action in the use of an episodic style; a theatre with a particular bias for technical innovation, drawing upon other arts and other civilizations; a theatre of action, whose objective is to bring out the stirring questions of modern time and to bring about a total re-education of both men of the theatre and the audience.

Taken individually these elements of the Epic drama were not new, as they had been employed individually in such theatres as Shakespeare, Moliere, the Expressionists, Dadaists, and others, but the evolution of the composite was considered to be an aesthetic and political revolution. Piscator opened up the stage, laid it bare, renounced consciously the artifices inherent in theatre prevalent in his time and questioned the domination of form over matter. The problems of content were projected in a new light. Ideas went to the front, emotions into the background. Instead of colorful, lyrical, and sentimental illusion, the Epic play went toward reality and the analysis of facts. Piscator recounts:

Little by little, a new dramaturgy was born: the Epic theatre, the political theatre, that is to say a theatre of almost scientific analysis, of critical objectivity. The stage no longer served for the display of personal conflicts, for the minute scrutiny of sentiments, but for the crude and unadorned presentation of social issues. The public was no longer asked to enjoy the performance but to adopt an attitude. No longer content with grasping fragments of reality, the theatre demanded total reality.²⁵

Brecht

The man most often associated with Epic theatre, Bertolt Brecht, arrived in Berlin in 1924 and participated in the formation of this new genre. As a young playwright, Brecht worked with Piscator on the adaptations of Rasputin, Konjunktur, and The Good Soldier Schweik, and the two men developed the form known as Lehrstück, a play intended to teach the audience something rather than simply amuse it. Although Brecht is often given credit for creating Epic theatre, it was Piscator who initiated and shaped in practice the form of the Epic drama while Brecht developed the theory of the Epic style. It was not until 1930 that Brecht made his first full statement concerning the Epic style, at which time he distinguished the shifts of accent between the dramatic and the Epic theatre:

DRAMATIC THEATRE

plot
implicates the spectator
in a stage situation
wears down his capacity
for action
provides him with
sensations
experience
the spectator is involved
in something
suggestion
instinctive feelings are
preserved
the spectator is in the
thick of it, shares
the experience
the human being is taken
for granted
he is unalterable
eyes on the finish
one scene makes another

EPIC THEATRE

narrative
turns the spectator into an
observer, but
arouses his capacity for
action
forces him to take
decisions
picture of the world
he is made to face
something
argument
brought to the point
of recognition
the spectator stands
outside, studies

the human being is the
object of the inquiry
he is alterable and able to alter
eyes on the course
each scene for itself

DRAMATIC THEATRE (continued)

growth
 linear development
 man as a fixed point
 thought determines being
 feeling

EPIC THEATRE (continued)

montage
 in curves
 man as a process
 social being determines
 thought
 reason²⁶

Thus Brecht expressed in writing the phenomena Piscator was incorporating as a director. In his work, Brecht's approach to the Epic drama "remained fictional and circumstantial, episodic and balladlike,"²⁷ while Piscator's concept was grounded in reality and developed into a theatre of facts.

Brecht came to see Piscator as "one of the most important theatre men of all time,"²⁸ and gave him credit for anticipating many of his (Brecht's) characteristic practices, including the "use of film and of film projections as an integral part of the settings,"²⁹ and "the moving platforms on the stage."³⁰ One could essentially argue - as Piscator did when accused of plagiarizing from Meyerhold (p.16 , n.50) - that the similarities in the work of Piscator and Brecht were coincidental, expressing a common reaction to the pressures of their Weimar environment. Brecht and Piscator began their work at the same point in history and each took up the Marxist doctrine. Opposing the limitations of Naturalism, they each emphasized objectivity in a polemic drama that rejected the emotionalism of the Expressionists, as stated by Piscator: "Our generation has set itself in conscious opposition to the over-emphasis, the over-evaluation of the emotions."³¹

However, Piscator was already experimenting with his 'realistic' practices in the Volksbuehne by the time that Brecht took up residence in Berlin. Even Brecht admitted that:

Piscator put on political theatre before the playwright (Brecht's impersonal way of referring to himself). He had taken part in the war, whereas the playwright had not. The upheaval in 1918, in which both took part, had disillusioned the playwright and turned Piscator into a politician. It was only later through long study that the playwright came to politics.

The supporters of Piscator disputed for a while with those of the playwright as to which of the two had discovered the epic style of performance. In fact they both evolved it at the same time in different cities; Piscator more in the staging, the playwright in the play.³²

Thus Brecht claims originality due to the fact that the two men developed the same theoretical approach to drama along parallel lines. Innes offers the following argument concerning the issue:

...there can be no doubt that Piscator, whose major techniques had been established before 1928 and whose theories were coherently formulated by the publication of The Political Theatre in 1929, was ahead of his more famous colleague. However, The Flight Over the Ocean and the Baden-Baden Cantata of Acquiescence of 1929 marked the end of Brecht's early fantastic and cynical extravaganzas, and it was only with Brecht's own production of Man Is Man in 1931 that his distinctive theatrical style emerged.³³

However, Man Is Man was written in 1924 and first produced in 1926, thus refuting Innes' argument. A review of Brecht's Epic works (Baal, 1918; Man Is Man, 1924-1926; The Three-Penny Opera, 1928) support his thesis that the Epic theatre was discovered independently and concurrently by both Piscator and himself. Both men were geniuses of the theatre, although as an author Brecht's ideas are available for wider distribution, while as a director Piscator's ideas necessitate an immediate audience and thus are not as readily known.

The Robbers

As a free-lance director at the Volksbühne, Piscator also directed productions at other theatres including the Staatstheater in Berlin

where he transformed Schiller's classic The Robbers into messianic drama. In his 1926 version (he produced the play again in 1957 at Mannheim) the fight between the two von Moor brothers, normally accepted as the fight between good and evil, became the fight between the established order (evil) and the Marxist revolt (good). Piscator saw in Karl von Moor "the cynical cliches of rising Naziism concealed within his pathetic speeches for freedom."³⁴ Franz von Moor was presented as a brutal representative of the ruling classes and Spielgelberg, masked as Trotsky, became the Bolshevist hero. The language was updated in the same way that the characters were given contemporary preoccupations, leaving little of Schiller's play except the main line of its action, its title and the names of its characters. Piscator was criticized for going to extreme measures in updating the play, especially in the use of films and banners, "to force its topicality."³⁵ It could be argued - as Piscator did - that Schiller had originally intended the play to have a politically revolutionary effect, and that this radical interpretation was the only way of gaining the equivalent response in a modern audience. Truth to the spirit of Schiller's work could only be achieved by sacrificing the text, since the specific details which had contemporary relevance for Schiller's public were now outdated. Piscator's primary concern was to reach his audience at any cost: "I would like every theatre to be a theatre where one could stop the play at the moment when the public no longer understands the text."³⁶ In keeping with this, Piscator's approach to the same play in 1957 was adjusted according to the current situation, while at the same time staying true to Schiller's basic theme

of liberty. While adapting his second production he wrote: "In my earlier production I had tried to transfer the force of Schiller's revolutionary pathos to the world of 1926. This is where I see the task of the director today and everyday."³⁷

The Stage

Ultimately this was the reasoning behind all of Piscator's technical innovations. His elaborate use of film and machinery was not designed for thrills or beauty but rather to illuminate "the spiritual concept [of the play] with the most modern means of expression."³⁸ One can understand the logic of using the 'most modern means' available when considering the fact that "every period speaks its own language and every art form is conditioned by its own experience."³⁹ In speaking to his German audiences Piscator felt they were "so spoiled with regard to optical effects"⁴⁰ that his messages were effective only when modern technical devices were employed. He believed the modern playgoer responded more positively when the glass, metal, and technical inventions on the stage confirmed the technological de-personalizing which surrounded him in his daily life. However, these devices were only a means to an end: "The search for the application of technical means is only the attempt to find the clearest expression; the shortest way of communication. The technical itself must become art."⁴¹

By 'technical art,' Piscator did not mean the art of creating exact reproductions of life or building stage pictures for psychological effects. The Epic stage was totally anti-illusionistic. Stage mechanics

were regarded as extensions of the exposition of the play and thus were functional and served a utilitarian purpose. Lights were used only to make the setting and the actor visible, not to imitate nature or to create a mood. Costumes were designed on similar principles.

Piscator's settings have often been compared to Meyerhold's Constructivist period, perhaps because, strictly speaking, there was no stage picture intended by either director. In actuality Piscator's stage had an infinitely greater variety of possibilities than Constructivism, the function of which was almost entirely spatial. It was the exercising of these possibilities that caused critics to refer to Piscator as a "maniacal machine-director,"⁴² and a "killer of art."⁴³ The fact that the machines did not always work caused even further criticism. Piscator explains:

The indubitably complicated apparatus which I always regarded functionally, that is as the means to the greatest and most playful simplicity of the play's progress, often seemed to become an end in itself, since it did not function due to some type of initial defects, and to force on me the role of the sorcerer's apprentice, who was no longer able to control the spirits he evoked.⁴⁴

Maria-Ley recalls one especially perilous situation when Piscator's functional apparatus did not function in his production of Gorki's

Lower Depths:

The scene was set by Piscator on different levels, with a continuous movement of elevators bringing one group of people down while the preceding group disappeared into a trap below the stage. At one moment the trap door got stuck while another elevator from above started moving. If it continued and the trap door did not open the group on the lower level would be crushed. At the last moment, while the orchestra members turned their heads away to avoid seeing the tragedy, the trap door finally opened.⁴⁵

One could hardly ask for a more vividly realistic metaphor to illustrate the machine's victimization of man.

Storm Over Gothland

Piscator continued to produce plays of political content and more or less Epic form at the Volksbuehne until he broke with that organization in 1927 over his production of Ehm Welk's historical drama, Storm Over Gothland, an account of a medieval revolt to which Piscator added a politically inspired film sequence. Piscator was accused of arbitrarily injecting propaganda into the work and the film strip was removed by the governing board of the Volksbuehne:

For the managers of the Volksbuehne, this was a play whose action belonged far back in the Middle Ages. Piscator accentuated the medieval atmosphere, but he brought to the production the most immediate significance for today, reinforcing the scenes on the stage with motion picture sequences showing in panorama the rebellion of the fishermen of Gothland. In the dissension that followed this successful production, the Volksbuehne management was embarrassed to find even the conservative newspapers ranged on the side of Piscator. The younger minority of the subscribers took the same position as the newspapers. The Volksbuehne and its chief director parted company. Piscator was once more left on his own, but this time he could count on a potential audience of the Junge Volksbuehne, thirty thousand in all.⁴⁶

Piscator's blending of film and stage drama in this production appears to have been the first successful experiment in combining modern technical media with the text, thereby insuring recognition of contemporary issues. The device of providing contemporary parallels by means of a film-strip was to remain an Epic-theatre device in many of his productions. In discussing his use of film he observed: "In the productions with which I was associated, we used film projections within the play as a sort of classic chorus. In fact, the film was used not merely to supplant painted backgrounds, but to create a dynamic and fluid world for the action of the play."⁴⁷

Meyerhold

Accusations were made later that "the plays Piscator directed at the Volksbuehne were related to the Expressionistic trends of Jessner or the Biomechanics of Meyerhold or to the theatrical theatre of Alexander Tairow."⁴⁸ If Piscator owed anything to Meyerhold, he learned it indirectly through Eisenstein, who had been trained by Meyerhold. S.M. Eisenstein's film Battleship Potemkin was shown in Berlin in 1925 and seems to have influenced Piscator's adaptation of cinematic techniques to the stage and his adoption of montage as an organizing principle, as well as having a direct effect on individual films for such productions as The Robbers, Storm Over Gothland, and Hoppla! We Live.⁴⁹ The composer for Battleship Potemkin, Edmund Meisel, also wrote music for Piscator's The Robbers and other productions, thus providing a tenuous connection to the ideas of Eisenstein. Although Meyerhold's work was followed with greatest interest, direct influence concerning his ideas is less likely, as Meyerhold did not bring his company to Berlin until 1930. In a postscript to The Political Theatre in 1966 Piscator wrote:

It was natural that we all looked to Russia at that time, and that we were curious about everything happening in the Soviet Union. But must we be branded as imitators of Meyerhold and Tairow because of that? I never saw their productions until the time that I was already sure of my own affair, that is, of my content and forms. Determination of priorities has always left me indifferent - as it has my friend Brecht - primarily because it never takes into account the unique and yet ever recurring fact that certain things in any period are 'in the air,' that is, some one physical or chemical discovery can be made simultaneously and independently in Tokyo and in New York. The question is not: what did so and so adopt (that is: 'steal') from so and so, but rather, for what purpose did he use this or that element, and how did it develop or change in accordance with different relationships, problems and tasks?⁵⁰

As with other suggested sources, Reinhardt, Jessner, and the Expressionists, there is no evidence of direct or conscious influence. Meyerhold may have anticipated later theatrical innovations such as abstract settings, montage, and 'biomechanical' acting; but any connection with Piscator's must be put down to the close relationship between the theatre and contemporary conditions. Being exposed to the same social changes, political theories and scientific advances that together made up the intellectual environment of their age, both innovators moved for a time in the same direction.

Hoppla! We Live

After his conflict with the Volksbuehne management, Piscator renovated an old theatre in West Berlin, the Theatre am Nollendorfplatz, set up his own independent Studio, and opened his Piscator-Buehne in 1927 with a production of Ernst Toller's Hoppla! We Live. For the production "some 10,000 feet of film were shot; four film projectors were used; and the nightly dismantling of the vast 'simultaneous set' cost twice what Piscator had estimated as the production's total daily cost."⁵¹ The object was to document the traumatic experience of a revolutionary idealist who emerges from eight years of imprisonment into a world run by his socialist comrades that he finds so intolerable that he commits suicide. Since Toller had not done so, Piscator set out to demonstrate what had happened during those eight years to destroy the hopes his hero had once entertained for a better world. "Episodes in the film develop the idea of war, inflation, boxing, dancing girls and other scissors-and-paste effects from newsreels, etc."⁵² Thus Piscator had

taken this essentially Expressionistic play and tried to charge it with political high tension.

As concerns Piscator's career, Hoppla! We Live was the turning point. Overnight he became a famous and controversial figure. He was denounced as a charlatan, a rabble-rouser, and he was acclaimed the leader of the progressive theatre movement and a genius. He became conscious of the real influence of the artist in society, an influence to be fully realized only within an equally powerful sense of responsibility to that society. This duality determined his every decision.⁵³

Total Theatre

Aware of his growing influence, Piscator became concerned with the effectiveness of his techniques for communicating his political ideas. "Direct political action"⁵⁴ was the response he sought from his audience, rather than a catharsis that purged all emotion and active frustration. Piscator's wife points out that "the playgoer should not continue to view the play passively but be consumed by it actively; that is, he should go through an experience that really challenges his conditioned thinking and that provokes change"⁵⁵ in his way of thinking and acting. For this was Piscator's ultimate message, that Man was not destined to a Fate beyond his control but could indeed shape his future (indeed, must) if he would only take action.

In order to induce this 'direct political action,' Piscator tried to shatter the complacency of the audience by drawing them into the action through his use of film, machines, and space. In his desire to directly involve the audience with the action taking place on the stage, to reinforce their awareness that the characters' problems were their problems, Piscator sought the creation of a 'Total Theatre,' one which

would "abolish the distance between stage and auditorium so as to obtain the public's active participation."⁵⁶ In 1927 he commissioned Walter Gropius, head of the Bauhaus in Dessau, to design an ultramodern 'Total Theatre' that would make the stage "a light and flexible instrument destined to serve mind and not sentimentality."⁵⁷ Gropius designed a boldly conceived all-purpose playhouse with swiveling parquet and adaptable to almost any scenic requirement. Gropius explains:

The Total Theatre provides a stage in arena form, a proscenium and a back stage, with two thousand seats disposed in amphitheatre form. There are no boxes, but by turning the big stage platform which is part of the orchestra, the small proscenium stage is placed in the center of the theatre and the usual set replaced by projecting scenery on twelve screens placed between the twelve main columns supporting the structure. Enclosed by the unbroken ovoid shape of the building the spectator is completely encircled by the action, while the events represented on stage are placed in the middle of the public.⁵⁸

This theatre is not concerned with accumulating complex technical fittings and gadgets for their own sake but with using them as the means by which the spectator is precipitated into the midst of the scenic action and spatially bound up with it in such a way that he is unable to take refuge behind the curtain.⁵⁹

Although delighted with the design, Piscator never possessed the capital to build the theatre and thus it remained a pipe dream like Meyerhold's similarly extravagant plans for an avant-garde total theatre in Moscow. He did, however, adapt what means he could to achieve a comparable effect of audience involvement in many of his productions. Brecht notes: "While they turned the stage into a machine-room, the auditorium became a public meeting. Piscator saw the theatre as a parliament, the audience as a legislative body."⁶⁰ Thus, he transformed the entire theatre into a workers' meeting hall in Tai Yang Awakes (1931) and used planted

actors in the audience (a device used by Reinhardt in Danton, 1920, and in Odet's Waiting for Lefty, 1935).

The model Gropius had made of his 'Total Theatre' was exhibited in Paris in 1930 and was much admired by architects and artists alike. Although never built, the design has continued to influence modern theatre architecture and "its imaginative use of space has never been surpassed."⁶¹

Rasputin

Insisting upon the cause-and-effect relationship between dramatic form and political content, Piscator continued to explore the possibilities of imparting political instruction or criticism in his Piscator-Buehne productions. Rasputin was a noteworthy effort in the sense that it marked the first of Piscator's works to be based on documentary sources and thus became a progenitor for the later Documentary drama. Piscator acknowledges the use of documents in Rasputin in his book The Political Theatre:

...we applied ourselves in the first place to studying the sources. Here are the documents which were utilized for the preparation of the play Rasputin (some forty works) ...I realized that one could not even explain Rasputin's slightest intrigue, or the most insignificant of his political measures, without referring to British policy in the Dardanelles or to military developments on the Western Front.⁶²

Thus, Piscator decided to take all of Europe as his subject and connected the private Rasputin story with the intertwining political and economical factors of the world conflict. To explain the stage production that ensued - this time with three film projectors and a globe-like stage - Piscator's play editor Leo Lania, who was apparently the chief author

of the final version of the play originally by Alexei Tolstoy, wrote of historical implications in the program:

Where does history end and where do politics begin? What can history mean to a world which is exploding with problems, destinies much more bitter and more gigantic than any before? Historic drama, to interest us today, cannot be the tragedy of some hero, but must be the political document of the age.⁶³

In order that playgoers might see the documents of the past that could illuminate the present, Piscator and his associates added no less than nineteen new scenes, with passages from memoirs and state documents depicting imperialist machinations to the original seven scenes of Tolstoy's play. The film strips and globe-like stage, segments of which opened and served as projection screens, presenting dates and scenes transpiring in different European capitals, fulfilled Piscator's desire to convert a private tragedy into a public, modernly applicable document. Six thousand feet of film called attention to important historical details, explaining or interpreting them, criticizing the characters' actions, or even haranguing the spectators.

Piscator brought his drama so up-to-date that two of his "historical figures" were in actuality still living and promptly sued Piscator for having portrayed them on stage. Dmitri Rubinstein, past secret financial advisor of the Czar, and later director of a bank in Paris, lost his case, but Wilhelm II (Kaiser of all the Germans), then exiled in Holland, managed to have his character eliminated from the play. The entire incident only enhanced public interest in the production, and "from then on there was standing room only at the Theater am Nollendorfplatz."⁶⁴

Brecht adds this anecdote:

When the former German Emperor had his lawyers protest at Piscator's plan to let an actor portray him on his stage, Piscator just asked if the Emperor wouldn't be willing to appear in person; he even offered him a contract. In short, the end was such a vast and important one that all means seemed justified.⁶⁵

This seems to be true even in the preparation of the productions. With such Herculean feats as films, machinery, and rewritten texts, it is obvious that many artists, writers, photographers, historians, and technicians were employed in order to execute Piscator's extravagant ideas. He saw these men not only as collaborators but as the working proletariat that made up the socially oriented machine of his political theatre: "Even as the wheels in a well designed machine revolve in unison, so a sort of collective production is born in a theatre founded on the principle of the collectivity."⁶⁶ The collective effort of artists and technicians was even more evident in his next production.

The Good Soldier Schweik

Having carried out the project of an Epic documentary with Rasputin, Piscator went on to develop an Epic satire in his most famous production of this period, The Good Soldier Schweik (1928). Adapted from Jaroslav Hacek's satirical novel of World War I by Bertolt Brecht, Felix Casbarra, Leo Lania, and Piscator himself, its ingredients - a passive hero, continual change of scene, and passages of commentary as vehicles of the satirical content - were well suited to the Epic style.

The opening performance revealed Schweik - Max Pallenberg, the great comic of the German theatre - starting toward his new life in the army, his first march to Budweis.

Schweik is the kind who obeys orders. He makes one step, then another. Then more. He marches in a straight line, looking neither right nor left.

There was a long moment's silence in the audience. Then Homeric laughter. The Good Soldier Schweik has not advanced a step. Why? He is walking on a treadmill that pulls him back with every step. However he strives, whatever effort he expends, the treadmill keeps him always in the same place.

A backdrop springs into line, turning into a large film screen. An army building appears, a pub, a physician, a general, a German field marshal, even his landlady. Cutout cartoon soldiers march alongside him and pass him by. So do all the other characters. Also the signal lamps, railroad tracks, gates at the crossing, and even the highway. The night sky...even a map of Budweis seems bound for somewhere else and also passes him by.

Only he, the truly good soldier, obedient subject of the Kaiser, fails to advance.⁶⁷

The dramatic action lay entirely in the movement of the production rather than in any destination sought and arrived at; neither Schweik nor the war had any distinct destination, and that was indeed the point of the satire. Piscator had concretized in his stage machinery the essence of this travesty, that of movement alone, without clearly perceived destination. His use of two conveyor belts, drawn across the stage from left to right in opposite directions, gave an assembly-line effect, with Man as the obvious victim of machinery's perpetual motion: "Piscator's complex stage technique was intended to represent the technological nature of modern society, and the materials he adapted to the stage were those of mass-culture and the industrial age."⁶⁸ The painter George Grosz designed the trick sets and puppets, giving both the stage properties and the figures a super-caricature, comic function, and making Schweik the only human being on stage in many scenes. Those characters who were directly involved in the action were represented by actors in grotesque masks that accentuated the characteristics

peculiar to their social function. A police spy, for example, was reduced to a single huge eye and monstrous ear, thus dehumanizing the character to abstract elements.

The Actor

Such a transformation of drama made it imperative to redefine the actor's task in terms of the conditions under which he was expected to work. If the modern audience required emphasis on an optical effect rather than stressing the traditional audible means of communication, the actor would not only have to learn to address the eye directly through mime, gesture, and motion, but he would also have to learn to work with the domineering devices of screens, machinery, and loudspeakers. When you add to that the occasional use of music, noisy unperfected machinery, and a chorus or two, then Maria-Ley's comment, "the disassociation was sometimes upsetting for the actor,"⁶⁹ seems somewhat of an understatement. One of the reasons Brecht never relied as heavily on machinery as Piscator was his belief that "with Piscator it was the actor and the machinery that openly conflicted."⁷⁰ Piscator, on the other hand, saw the actor as just another technological tool, an opinion Meyerhold reached as well:

The actor acquired for me, who was concerned with the overall effect of the work and with its political orientation, a function analogous to that of the lighting, of the colours, of the music, of the scenic apparatus, and of the text itself.⁷¹

Rather than seeing the machinery and films as direct competitors of the actor, Piscator hoped these devices would free the actor, giving him new dimensions so that their use would ultimately become "as natural and necessary as the machines in real life."⁷² Nevertheless, the actor

and the machinery were there to serve the message, as the subject matter was predominant in every play.

The actor's physical importance had not only been diminished by the screen and the loudspeaker, but he was no longer required to bring out the personality of the character whom he represented, as human relationships had been replaced by the abstract web of economic and political forces. Since the complexity and the vastness of the historical material used by Piscator dealt with masses whose numbers made them faceless, the actor portrayed types distinguished by social function instead of by personal characteristics.

In order to create an appropriate style of acting for his concept of drama, Piscator formed an acting 'collective' for his theatre am Nollendorfplatz in 1928. Through this collective or Studio he developed an unemotional, impersonal, methodical style of acting which was similar to the concept of modern machinery. He stressed the physical aspects of training, similar to Meyerhold's 'Biomechanics,' so that his actors would have complete control over their bodies. Rather than working against painted drops or stationary furniture, the actor was set in the context of motion and his physical control was essential in order to indicate the external motives for his actions. Essentially, the 'montage' of facts and the heterogeneous media used in the plays needed a unifying factor to create an artistic whole out of the discordant elements. Piscator thus saw the role of the actor as one of unification:

The Epic actor will be a sort of narrator. I don't mean by this the narrator who remains downstage and addresses the audience directly. Even such formal addresses and commentary, if he knows how to lose himself in the character at the same time, are possible.

When he strolls over the stage in the most casual way, he will still be acting as a kind of guide, who knows every one of the pictures he is showing. ...The clarity with which he approaches his subject and communicates it has to convince his partner on the stage and me, the third partner in the audience. ...He will make the set his partner. He will make it another actor, or a commentator, as he needs it - and he is himself both actor and commentator.⁷³

So far the actor sounds more like a tour guide than artist, but in actuality Piscator was merely calling for an actor who could address the audience directly, introduce and comment on certain devices necessary to the plot, and then participate fully as a character in that play. Piscator wanted his actors to "act with the knowledge that life is more important than the play - but that at the same time, it is understood that at the particular moment, there is no more dignified example of life than this particular slice of life in this particular play."⁷⁴

Piscator differentiated Brecht's 'alienation effect' from his own Epic concept. He claimed that Brecht's style romanticized and idealized the concepts of the classical Oriental theatre, while his own acting style, which he called "objective,"⁷⁵ was developed in direct response to his mechanization of the stage, and he defined it as the concentration on communicating facts instead of depicting characters. Brecht would counter to Piscator, "Please stop your damned logical way of acting."⁷⁶

Piscator felt that the 'fourth wall' did not belong in a didactic theatre in which audience involvement was sought. Disagreeing with Stanislavski's 'Method,' he stated: "It is not true that your the actor's centre of attention lies in the middle of the stage. ...When you play before a public, the public must be the center of your attention."⁷⁷ This contact with the audience was the basis of Piscator's depersonalized

acting style, a technique he had discovered when performing in the workers' beer-halls.

The Good Soldier Schweik landed Piscator once more in the judiciary courts with charges concerning broken copyright laws and a criminal charge of blasphemy for Grosz's satiric cartoons. Financial pressures added to his difficulties, as the production costs of his shows had been excessive.⁷⁸ In June, 1928, the first Piscator-Buehne went bankrupt and a second theatre had to be hired to fulfill obligations to the subscription organization.

In Retrospect

On looking back, the Piscator-Buehne productions were successful by any standards: they explored political problems in a thorough and relevant manner, presented the stage as a moral tribunal similar to the Schillerian concept⁷⁹, provoked public controversy concerning the nature of art, influenced contemporary playwrights and directors, and functioned as a social forum, attracting every class of citizen to the theatre. Yet they could not survive for any length of time. Due to Piscator's constant experimentation and his excessive use of machinery, and because of the unstable political situation in the Weimar Republic, each of Piscator's ventures was short-lived. His radical experiments aroused artistic and political opposition, making Piscator a lightning-rod for controversy and scandal.

It was Piscator's transformation of the theatre into a political and moral tribunal, placing it in an ideological position and aggravating the political situation, which caused his most serious difficulties and terminated the second Piscator-Buehne in 1929. Resurgent Nationalism

caused a protest against Walter Mehring's treatment of the Jews in The Merchant of Berlin, closing the theatre with the first production. In the following years Piscator produced several shows as a free-lance director until the political situation caused him to leave Germany in 1931.

Exile

In 1930 the National Socialists won 107 seats in the Reichstag, leaping overnight from an insignificant faction to a formidable party which foreshadowed the rise of Hitler and Naziism. Recognizing the power of the theatre as a political platform, the government tightened its control over the arts, causing an increasing exodus of artists from 1930 on. Jessner was forced to resign from the Staatstheatre and Reinhardt took refuge in Austria. Piscator staged a touring production of Karl Crede's Section 218 (titled after the section of the law pertaining to abortions) and due to the advocacy of legalized abortion in the play, he was arrested on a trumped-up charge of tax evasion while Crede was imprisoned in Stuttgart for allegedly procuring abortions. Both were released a month later after a public outcry, but that same year (1931) Piscator "went gloomily off to Moscow to make films."⁸⁰ His acting troupe, who toured abroad with Section 218 after police action, finally disbanded in June, 1932. One of the last to leave, Brecht went to Scandinavia after the Reichstag fire in 1933. "The Nazi revolution of 1933 erased at one stroke, with a completeness unprecedented in history, all the cultural achievements of the republican era, including the drama."⁸¹ Despite their cries of the revival of a truly Germanic 'kultur,' the

Nazis were manifestly unproductive in the twelve years that followed, and there was no one left in Germany who was in a position to oppose them on stage or page.

Piscator spent several years (1932-1936) in the U.S.S.R. during which he directed one film, Anna Segher's novel The Revolt of the Fishermen, which was suppressed. He was elected secretary of the International Revolutionary Theatre Association in 1934, an organization of Agitprop troupes which he expanded to coordinate the various efforts of all left-wing and liberal theatre groups, but left Moscow for Paris in 1936 because of the control exerted over his work. In Paris he worked with Alfred Neumann on his first version of War and Peace, which he eventually produced in New York in 1942 and again in Berlin in 1955.

On April 17, 1937 Piscator married dancer, teacher-director Frederike V. Czada, known as Maria-Ley. They left for the U.S.A. in 1939, where he founded and directed (1940-1951) the Dramatic Workshop at the New School for Social Research in New York City.

The Dramatic Workshop

As Hitler's war spread and intensified, many anti-Nazi and Jewish scholars found it necessary to seek refuge across the ocean. Dr. Alvin Johnson, Director of the New School for Social Research, a leading institution for adult education in the United States, created a University in Exile in 1933 in order to accommodate the refugee scholars with teacher's visas, the only quota open at the time. In 1939 Dr. Johnson hired Piscator to head a new Dramatic Workshop in the University, giving

Piscator the opportunity to continue his work and Americans the opportunity to work with one of the most brilliant leaders of the modern theatre.

Piscator began his Workshop by concentrating on the actor. He stressed a 'total' concept of training, insisting that history, psychology, and philosophy be included with the following artistic training:

The acting experiment: actor-dancer, actor-architect
 The literary experiment: analysis, dramaturgy
 The audience experiment: a people's theatre
 The social experiment: the learning play (Lehrstuck)
 The political experiment: dialectical theatre, dramatized history,
 universal theatre⁸²

He continued to stress objective acting, physical training, and the Epic approach. Over a period of ten years he expanded the curriculum to include every phase of the theatre (including film), worked with or trained many of the leading figures in American modern theatre, directed over a hundred plays, and encouraged the development of off-Broadway stages. Maria-Ley Piscator gives a detailed account of his work in America in her book The Piscator Experiment (1967). A summation of his achievements over the first eight years was given in Theatre Arts, 1948, under the title "Broadway Incubator":

Today the Dramatic Workshop...is an established institution offering two-year majors in acting, directing, stagecraft, and playwriting, full programs of study in film, radio and television. A faculty of fifty including John Gassner, Lee Strasberg, Edward Mobley and Joseph T. Shipley staffs 375 full and 450 part-time students; four buildings house two theatres, practical workshops with professional standards - the intimate 250 seat President Theatre and the spacious 800 seat Rooftop People's Theatre.

The Dramatic Workshop's March of Drama Repertory is a history of the theatre illustrating the culture and society portrayed in every age, presenting plays from Aristophanes to O'Neill. The thirty-odd productions stem from Gassner's March of Drama lectures and demonstrations, twenty plays currently, three to six new ones

added each year. ...New Plays in Work and the Playwrights Seminar introduce their students' plays; March of Dance traces its development from antiquity to modern times. By serving as this training and proving ground, the Dramatic Workshop of the New School has provided the theatrical touchstone paving the way for many, including Pulitzer Prize Playwright Tennessee Williams, Phillip Jordan, Marlon Brando, and Elaine Stritch.⁸³

While in America Piscator continued to produce the type of theatre he had in Germany, including political theatre as it pertained to the universal issues of peace and freedom. However, he carefully avoided specific political issues in the America of McCarthy (early 1950's), fearing repression on the grounds of his previous Communist association. He employed the use of film and stage machinery as far as his slender means would allow, inviting criticism from his first New York production of King Lear on an overworked turntable in 1940 to his staging of All The King's Men eight years later in which he made continual use of a tiny revolving stage and several ramps for constantly shifting the playing areas. His productions aimed at audience participation, as they had in the past: "instantly you were catapulted into the midst of a crackling theatre world; actors leaping out of seats, men shouting from the aisles, loudspeakers blaring from the rear, scenery shifting on stage before your very eyes."⁸⁴

Essentially, his work was an extension of the work he had done in Germany, and thus he was often faced with the same problems. One issue which had constantly plagued Piscator was that of finding plays suitable for Epic theatre. He continued to adapt novels into dramas, but this invariably led to irritable relationships between him and the author/playwrights, as his demands were many and strenuous. The situation was

especially tense when he adapted Robert Penn Warren's All The Kings Men in 1948.

The Play and Playwright

Piscator had always demonstrated an autocratic disregard for authors' rights, although he encouraged unknown writers. Of the thirty-nine productions that he directed from 1920 to 1931, no less than twenty-six were either first productions or German premieres and only four were in any sense established plays - two by Gorki, one by Strindberg and one by Schiller. Reputable authors could not always comprehend his aims and did not want to rewrite their work (Gorki refused to rewrite The Lower Depths at Piscator's personal request, while Max Brod sued when The Good Soldier Schweik was rewritten without his consent), so Piscator, with the help of his dramaturge, often wrote his own scripts. Instead of accepting finished plays, he preferred to work with the dramatist:

On the ideological as on the formal plane, the playwrights had lagged behind the idea we had formed of the theatre. ...Still and always, what they had to offer were only 'pieces' in the true sense of the word, fragments of the age, excerpts from a vision of the world, but never the totality...never the burning actuality with which every sentence read in the newspaper assails you. The theatre...was never sufficiently actual, it did not intervene actively enough in the immediate, as a ⁸⁵form of art it was petrified, predetermined, limited in its effects.

Whether working directly with the playwright or independently, Piscator invariably altered the form and manner of execution of the plays to fulfill the requirements of Epic theatre. In the beginning his concern was immediacy, changing dates and placards daily to create "a closer link with the press, with day-by-day events,"⁸⁶ but he gradually rejected

such 'topicality' for more universal issues. However, as a director without a play, he found it necessary to adapt works continuously. This adaptation often led right through rehearsal and production dates due to the unreliable performance of his stage-machinery. These constant adjustments of the script, as well as the subordinate position of the literary work to the technical devices, discouraged dramatists from submitting their plays to Piscator. Few playwrights were prepared to sacrifice as much independence as Friedrich Wolf, who rewrote Tai Yang Awakes three times, or Walter Mehring, author of The Merchant of Berlin:

Mehring, alert of mind and an admirer of Piscator, obeyed and rewrote during the night what was destroyed during the day. One morning - it was shortly before the opening - he arrived with his right arm bandaged. He had acquired an infection, he said, and was incapable of writing any more changes. Piscator smiled indulgently and ordered a secretary to assist Mehring.⁸⁷

To the continued criticism that his productions violated authors' rights Piscator replied, "Write better plays!"⁸⁸ He tried to remedy the problem by training authors as well as actors in Berlin and America, but the issue was not fully resolved until the end of his career when a new genre emerged, the Documentary Drama.

The Case of Clyde Griffiths

Several plays staged in America began to handle the intricate complexities of contemporary subject matter in a direct manner and formed a nucleus of concrete achievements that provided a working basis for what is frequently referred to as 'Documentary Theatre' when it eventually appeared. One of these productions especially foreshadowed this new style, Dreiser's An American Tragedy, adapted by Piscator under the title

of The Case of Clyde Griffiths and produced in New York in 1936 by the Group Theatre under the direction of Lee Strasberg.⁸⁹

The Case of Clyde Griffiths assumes the form of a demonstration by means of a court trial. In this dramatization of Dreiser's novel, a Narrator acting as the lawyer for the defense and treating the audience as the jury endeavored to extenuate Clyde's guilt by demonstrating the nature and effect of the forces that collaborated with the immature hero's weak character in encompassing his ruin. The outer form of the play was a trial, but with a difference: whereas the ordinary trial drama zealously maintained the illusion of a court trial, Piscator's treatment broke the illusion with the Narrator's speeches to the audience and with the devices of an illustrated lecture; also, while the average trial play presents a tightly knit action of conflict and discovery, the Piscator dramatization presented a string of episodes as case-history data in the Epic-novelist manner. Unfortunately, its didactic approach was unpopular and "Strasberg suggested to Harold Clurman he write a letter to the press making clear that the Group was not to be held accountable for the playwright's ideas or tastes."⁹⁰ However, the play had opened up the trial-drama genre in two senses - in letting the action and the argument spill over the proscenium arch into the audience, thus breaking the tight structure of the well-made-play type of realism, and in visualizing on the stage a series of episodes intended to enlarge Clyde's trial of his milieu, if not indeed of society as a whole. The latter device is especially seen in the forthcoming genre of Documentary Drama.

The Advent

Piscator returned to Europe in 1951 when the Dramatic Workshop had to close because of financial problems. For the next decade he worked as a free-lance director in the Bundesrepublik, which restricted his influence on the development of post-war drama since he was without a base theatre or trained ensemble. But during this period he brought his style to a new precision with a simple innovation - he designated part of the stage as a 'Stage of Fate' and lighted the area from beneath through a glass floor to incorporate individual characters into the wider patterns of historical events. He states:

When man can walk on light, he will have no spatial limits. Then there will be the stage not only without 'locality,' but also without 'space.' One could say, man would be self-dependent. He hovers in space. He becomes man in himself.⁹¹

In 1962 when Piscator was appointed director of the Freie Volksbuehne in West Berlin a young playwright submitted his first script, which Piscator recognized as the type of drama he had been seeking since the twenties. In a forward he wrote for its publication, he described Rolf Hochhuth's The Deputy as an "epic play, epic-scientific, epic-documentary, a play for the epic, 'political' theatre for which I fought for thirty years; a 'total' play for a 'total' theatre,"⁹² and its production in February, 1963 marked the foundation of a new dramatic genre.

In 1964 Piscator directed the first production of Heinar Kipphardt's In The Matter Of J. Robert Oppenheimer and in 1965 the premiere of Peter Weiss' The Investigation. These Documentary dramas were the

fulfillment of Piscator's work, designed as it was to deal with the relevant issues of contemporary existence.

Documentary Drama

The characteristics of Documentary Drama adhere to Piscator's principles: the use of documentation and historical analysis in determining the dramatic form, without losing the artistic freedom to create an aesthetic pattern. He describes the new genre as:

...a dramatic art which distils [sic] from reality - historical or contemporary - a work of art that meets the requirements of a drama and attains in content a degree of actuality and political force rarely possessed by previous dramatic literature.⁹³

The texts by Hochhuth, Kipphardt, and Weiss that Piscator produced are of immediate importance, their material is documentary and focused on contemporary events. The dramatizations have a clarity which Piscator had associated with the practical intention of directly influencing the audience, yet a high literary standard is preserved.

In Piscator's work stage machinery was not completely disregarded since it still had importance as a correlative of the contemporary environment, but by the 1960's technology had advanced and the new theatres built in place of those destroyed during the war were largely equipped with modern and efficient machinery. Thus Piscator's technological innovations such as the stage revolve, mechanized stairs, film, and projections, were frequently utilized and consequently received little attention when employed in Documentary productions. However, the main reason Piscator was able to subjugate his technological approach was the fact that, for the first time in his career, the message he desired

to relate was contained primarily in the dialogue of the play rather than his having to produce it through visual symbols.

Hochhuth's portrayal of real individuals and public figures on the stage was just the beginning. Such figures as Oppenheimer, Hitler, Lee Harvey Oswald, Churchill, and many others have followed. Court trials, revolutions and historically polemic events have become subjects of open discussion in the theatre, and dramatists have shown themselves capable of dealing effectively with large-scale events of direct relevance to their audiences. Not all the plays are good, but it was a breakthrough.

Erwin Piscator died March 30, 1966, in Starnberg, Germany, following emergency surgery for a ruptured gall bladder, at the age of 72.

Summation

On the basis of Piscator's record and the almost entirely political reaction to his productions in the Weimar era, it is easy to dismiss him as a director whose primary concern was of a polemic rather than artistic one. However, his work deserves careful study on the basis of his technical innovations and his influence in creating a new form of modern drama. He transformed the theatre at its source - the stage. In doing so he anticipated Marshall McLuhan's analysis of modern media, where the way in which a message is expressed is considered to be more important than the content because the medium determines the meaning. By this definition art communicates values in its manipulation of the means of expression, so that to change the method of communication automatically alters cultural values as well as subject matter - and indeed, according to a slightly more established authority, creates

a new art: "If you can find in Nature a new material (media)...then you can say that you are on the high road towards creating a new art. For you have found that by which you can create it."⁹⁴ Piscator's experiments changed the nature of the stage, and he was able to justify his textual alterations on the grounds that theatrical forms condition the type of play dramatists write.

Piscator's role in encouraging the contemporary school of German documentary dramatists alone should have earned his work more attention than it has been given up to now. But his influence was not limited to his direct associates, Brecht, Walter Mehring, Leo Lania and Friedrich Wolf, nor to Hochhuth, Kipphardt, Weiss and their more recent followers, Tancred Dorst and Günther Grass. His Agitprop experiments, which determined the form of the English Theatre of Action and the American Living Newspaper as well as the German workers' theatre movement, have become widely accepted, and their indirect influence can be seen in productions as far apart as the Royal Shakespeare Company's U.S., the Theatre Workshop's Oh What A Lovely War or Garson's MacBird. Joan Littlewood and Ewan McColl translated his version of Schweik in the 1930's and incidents from it recur in Oh What A Lovely War. His Total Theatre techniques are used in such different plays as Dionysus In '69 and Chicago '70. His documentary ideas have spread as far as Japan and South America, and in America such plays as The Pueblo and The Catonsville Nine have brought out political issues with moral implications for public debate.

Apart from specific influence, the significance of his work for the theatre as a whole can be seen in the tribute paid to him by Brecht

and The Berliner Ensemble:

Piscator is the greatest theatre man of all time. There was always protest with this man, always fight. His love for experimentation, his great scenic innovations, never existed for themselves. They served one goal - to transform man through all the existing artistic, as well as technical means of the theatre. ...Even the contrasts in Piscator's lifework; his mistakes and his detours, cannot diminish the grandeur of this fighting Humanist. He will leave a legacy which we should use.⁹⁵

As an influence to the dramatic art form, Piscator ranks with Appia, Artaud, Brecht and Meyerhold; but the highest tribute that might be paid to him is simply that his theatre was "the most interesting stage in Europe."⁹⁶

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER I

¹Gotthold E. Lessing states in 1769: "Now, if poets would be patriotic they could do much on the stage to forward invention and industry. A standing theatre would be a material advantage to a nation. It would have a great influence on the national temper and mind by helping the nation to agree in opinions and inclinations. The stage alone can do this, because it commands all human knowledge, exhausts all positions, illumines all hearts, unites all classes, and makes its way to the heart and understanding by the most popular channels." G.E. Lessing. "Hamburg Dramaturgy." European Theories of The Drama. (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1970), Barrett H. Clark, Editor, p. 223.

²C.D. Innes. Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 11.

³Schiller considered esthetics as a forceful and constructive factor in public life, as illustrated in several letters to the Duke of Augustenburg in 1793: "...one must take the esthetic way in order to solve the political problem, since it is through beauty that one progresses towards freedom." Friedrich von Schiller as quoted in Freedom and Dignity. Deric Regin. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), p. 120.

⁴Lumley states: "It [Expressionism] had its roots in dissatisfaction with the authoritarian rule of Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany and Emperor Franz Josef of Austria and with the materialism of a predominantly middle-class society. It bloomed in the economic and social chaos that afflicted the two countries after the war. ...The same spirit of rebellion against the middle class and its institutions animated futurism, dadaism, and surrealism..." Frederick Lumley. New Trends in Twentieth-Century Drama. (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1967), p. 103.

Bauland states: "In the twenty-five years after the emergence of naturalism there was what for Germany can be considered a period of comparative social and political stability. However, the years immediately preceding and during World War I led to the complete dissolution of the fabric of the country in almost every way. The Weimar Republic which rose from the revolution of 1918 was ideologically opposed to the imperial Germany of the past. Yet the public was so deeply rooted in its old notions of national destiny that it was unable to accept even the incipient stages of democracy, and the Republic, externally democratic but in essence still substantially authoritarian, was ripe for inroads from both the extreme right and left. It was the social panacea of the left that commanded an early following after the war, particularly in southern Germany... It was during those years of impending and actual war, revolution, futile political reform, and social instability that experimental movements known as expressionism, dadaism, symbolism and futurism flourished." Peter Bauland. The Hooded Eagle. (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1968), p. 64.

Brockett states: "Expressionists opposed Realism and Naturalism on the grounds that they focused attention upon surface details and implied that the observable phenomena of contemporary materialistic and mechanistic society represent fixed truths. ...Many Expressionists...worked to transform social and political conditions so that they would no longer mechanize and distort man's spirit and prevent his attainment of happiness." Oscar G. Brockett. History of the Theatre. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1968), p. 593.

⁵Mordecai Gorelik. New Theatres for Old. (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1962), p. 22.

⁶Georg Kaiser. "Man In the Tunnel." An Anthology of German Expressionist Drama. (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1963), Walter H. Sokel, Editor, p. 12.

⁷Gorelik describes Piscator's reaction to the situation in 1926: "Piscator was told that he had turned art into propaganda. In turn he charged that at a time when the Volksbuehne subscribers, in the midst of life-and-death struggles, were looking to their theatre for guidance, the Volksbuehne management was prudently limiting itself to 'cultural' productions of Faust and Hamlet which were devoid of all 'culture' since they were scarcely more than displays of costume and elocution." Mordecai Gorelik. op. cit., p. 383.

⁸Erwin Piscator. "Objective Acting." Actors On Acting. (New York: Crown Publishers, 1949), Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, Editors, p. 285.

⁹Erwin Piscator. "The Adaptation of the Novel to the Stage." World Theatre. (1956, Vol. 5, No. 4), p. 294.

¹⁰Erwin Piscator as quoted in The Piscator Experiment. Maria-Ley Piscator. (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), p. 2.

¹¹John Heartfield, brother of Wieland Herzfelde, had anglicized his name in protest against Germany's part in the war.

¹²Yvan Goll. "Two Superdramas." An Anthology of German Expressionist Drama. op. cit., p. 9.

¹³Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁴Bertolt Brecht as quoted in The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht. John Willett. (New York: New Directions Publishing Corp., 1968), p. 108.

¹⁵Tristan Tzara as quoted in Piscator's Political Theatre. op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁶Erwin Piscator as quoted in "Heinar Kipphardt Pays Tribute to Erwin Piscator." Heinar Kipphardt. World Theatre. (1968, Vol. 17, No. 5-6), p. 303.

¹⁷The Agitprop (agitation-propaganda) plays began in Russia after the Revolution (1917) as a means of spreading news to the illiterate population. From the town 'crier' reading telegraphs of news, often containing Communistic propaganda, there developed an exhibit of the news involving several people. By 1923 an Agitprop troupe, the 'Blue Shirts,' toured the country and presented the news, using speech, song, dance and gymnastics, forming the first 'living newspaper.' See C.D. Innes, op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁸C.D. Innes. op. cit., p. 6.

¹⁹Erwin Piscator as quoted in The Piscator Experiment. op. cit., p. 262.

²⁰Ibid., p. 70.

²¹Ibid., p. 71.

²²Erwin Piscator. "Postface to The Political Theatre." World Theatre. (1968, Vol. 17, No. 5-6), p. 351.

²³H.F. Garten. Modern German Drama. (Fair Lawn, New Jersey: Essential Books, 1959), p. 11.

²⁴John Willett. The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht. op. cit., p. 109.

²⁵Erwin Piscator as quoted in "Heinar Kipphardt Pays Tribute to Erwin Piscator." op. cit., p. 309.

²⁶Bertolt Brecht as quoted in Brecht on Theatre. (New York: Hill and Wang, Inc., 1964), John Willett, Editor, p. 37.

²⁷Maria-Ley Piscator. op. cit., p. 205.

²⁸Bertolt Brecht as quoted in Brecht on Theatre. op. cit., p. 77.

²⁹Ibid., p. 77.

³⁰Ibid., p. 78.

³¹Erwin Piscator as quoted in Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre. op. cit., p. 192.

³²Bertolt Brecht as quoted in Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre. op. cit., p. 192.

- ³³C.D. Innes. op. cit., p. 192.
- ³⁴Erwin Piscator. "My Production of The Robbers." World Theatre. (1968, Vol. 17, No. 5-6), p. 339.
- ³⁵Ibid., p. 337.
- ³⁶Erwin Piscator as quoted in "The Liberty of the Producer." World Theatre. (1956, Vol. 5, No. 4), p. 315.
- ³⁷Erwin Piscator. "My Production of The Robbers." op. cit., p. 339.
- ³⁸Maria-Ley Piscator. op. cit., p. 226.
- ³⁹Ibid., p. 180.
- ⁴⁰Erwin Piscator as quoted in The Piscator Experiment. op. cit., p. 224.
- ⁴¹Ibid., p. 225.
- ⁴²Erwin Piscator. "Postface to The Political Theatre." op. cit., p. 355.
- ⁴³Ibid.
- ⁴⁴Ibid.
- ⁴⁵Maria-Ley Piscator. op. cit., p. 186.
- ⁴⁶Mordecai Gorelik. op. cit., p. 388.
- ⁴⁷Erwin Piscator. "The Theatre of the Future." Tomorrow. (1942, Vol. 2, February), p. 15.
- ⁴⁸Maria-Ley Piscator. op. cit., p. 74.
- ⁴⁹C.D. Innes. op. cit., p. 188.
- ⁵⁰Erwin Piscator. "Postface to The Political Theatre." op. cit., p. 353.
- ⁵¹John Willett. The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht. op. cit., p. 110.
- ⁵²Frederick Lumley. op. cit., p. 83.
- ⁵³Maria-Ley Piscator. op. cit., pp. 81-82.
- ⁵⁴Erwin Piscator. "Postface to The Political Theatre." op. cit., p. 351.

- 55Maria-Ley Piscator. op. cit., p. 178.
- 56Erwin Piscator. "Totaltheater (theatre of totality) and Totales Theatre (Total Theatre)." World Theatre. (1966, Vol. 15, No. 1), p. 5.
- 57Ibid., p. 7.
- 58Walter Gropius as quoted in The Piscator Experiment. op. cit., p. 83.
- 59Erwin Piscator. "Totaltheater (theatre of totality) and Totales Theater (Total Theatre)." op. cit., p. 7.
- 60Bertolt Brecht as quoted in Brecht on Theatre. op. cit., p. 130.
- 61Oscar Brockett. op. cit., p. 599.
- 62Erwin Piscator as quoted in "Heinar Kipphardt Pays Tribute to Erwin Piscator." op. cit., p. 307.
- 63Leo Lania as quoted in The Piscator Experiment. op. cit., p. 84.
- 64Maria-Ley Piscator, op. cit., p. 86.
- 65Bertolt Brecht as quoted in Brecht on Theatre. op. cit., p. 131.
- 66Erwin Piscator as quoted in "Heinar Kipphardt Pays Tribute to Erwin Piscator." op. cit., p. 311.
- 67Maria-Ley Piscator. op. cit., p. 88.
- 68Ibid., p. 89.
- 69Ibid., p. 229.
- 70Bertolt Brecht as quoted in Brecht on Theatre. op. cit., p. 132.
- 71Erwin Piscator as quoted in "Heinar Kipphardt Pays Tribute to Erwin Piscator." op. cit., p. 311.
- 72Erwin Piscator. "Objective Acting." op. cit., p. 290.
- 73Ibid., p. 290.
- 74Ibid., p. 291.
- 75Ibid., p. 288.

⁷⁶Bertolt Brecht as quoted in The Piscator Experiment. op. cit., p. 179.

⁷⁷Erwin Piscator. "Objective Acting." op. cit., p. 287.

⁷⁸See C.D. Innes, op. cit., p. 6; Brecht also notes: "The experiments that we undertook at the Nollendorf Theatre and at the Schiffbanerdamm Theater alone cost more than half a million dollars." Bertolt Brecht as quoted in Brecht on Theatre. op cit., p. 80.

⁷⁹Piscator's exclusive focus on reality invalidates his work by the idealistic standards of traditional art which were particularly strong in German culture. Goethe and Schiller defined art as the aspiration to the Good and the Beautiful, creating a gulf between poetic and public values which academics had deepened by restricting aesthetic recognition to established ways of treating traditional areas of experience; and this dichotomy was particularly obvious in the theatre, where an artificial mode of acting the Classics had become established and dominated other styles of representation. Realistic criteria thus stood contrasted more obviously with accepted ideas of theatrical art than in other countries, and even Piscator's supporters asserted that he was "no director for works of art. He is the greatest producer of contemporary material that we have in Germany. He needs scenarios which select and handle (concrete) themes. No fantasies, no fiction, no poetry." Herbert Jhering, 1926, as quoted in "The Theatre of Erwin Piscator." H. Bernard. Prompt. (1963, Vol. 3), p. 43.

⁸⁰Bertolt Brecht as quoted in Brecht on Theater. op. cit., p. 66.

⁸¹H.F. Garten. op. cit., p. 17.

⁸²Maria-Ley Piscator. op. cit., p. 92.

⁸³Eric Bentley. "Broadway Incubator." Theatre Arts. (1948, Vol. 5, No. 3, March), p. 21.

⁸⁴L.F.G. as quoted in Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre. op. cit., p. 139.

⁸⁵Erwin Piscator as quoted in "Heinar Kipphardt Pays Tribute to Erwin Piscator." op. cit., p. 305.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 305.

⁸⁷Maria-Ley Piscator. op. cit., p. 226.

⁸⁸Erwin Piscator as quoted in Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre. op. cit., p. 68.

⁸⁹The government-subsidized Federal Theatre (1935-1939), the first and thus far only 'state theatre' in the United States, was noted for its 'Living Newspaper' productions in which there was an application of theatricalism to the following social dramas: Waiting for Lefty (1935), Triple A-Ploughed (1936), Power (1937), and One-Third of a Nation (1938).

⁹⁰Maria-Ley Piscator. op. cit., p. 41.

⁹¹Erwin Piscator as quoted in "Piscator in Germany, His Last Productions." Hans-Ulrich Schmuckle. World Theatre. (1968, Vol. 17, No. 5-6), p. 365.

⁹²Erwin Piscator. "Introduction to The Deputy." The Storm Over THE DEPUTY. (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964), Eric Bentley, Editor, p. 14.

⁹³Erwin Piscator. "Post Investigation." World Theatre. (1968, Vol. 17, No. 5-6), p. 349.

⁹⁴Gordon Craig. On the Art of the Theatre. (Chicago, Illinois: Browne's Books, 1911), p. 73.

⁹⁵Bertolt Brecht as quoted in The Piscator Experiment. op. cit., p. 290.

⁹⁶C.D. Innes. op. cit., p. 207.

CHAPTER II: DOCUMENTARY DRAMA DEFINED

Post-World War II Germany

Time has given us perspective in discerning the major contributions Piscator has made to the theatre, and certainly his pioneering work with documentary plays has proved to be one of his more important efforts. In order to fully appreciate the gradual evolution of the new Documentary Drama, which made its appearance as a new genre in 1960, it is necessary to examine the conditions in post-World War II German theatre as it recovered from Fascist cultural policies.

The rapid financial and physical reconstruction of Germany after World War II brought with it a resurrection of the theatre, something that Germans, in war or peace, with fascism or with freedom, seem unable to do without. Most of the German theatres were destroyed during the later years of the war; the German drama seems to have been destroyed long before. After 1945, plays were produced in halls, schools, back rooms, and cellars. Then came the rebuilding of the German theatres and the construction of hundreds of new ones throughout the country. The system of decentralization has persisted, and there are companies in each of West Germany's major cities and in some of East Germany's. The Berliner Ensemble, which Brecht established in East Berlin, is not the only great post-war repertory but certainly among the most famous.

The German drama recovered more slowly than German theatre. On the periphery of Germany, in German speaking Switzerland, German drama was kept alive by native Swiss playwrights, Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Max Frisch. Until German-born, Swedish citizen, Peter Weiss turned to drama, the two Swiss writers were Brecht's principal German language heirs. Eric Bentley

gives the following account of the situation:

As for the drama, it seemed for a while that the German theatre had emigrated to Switzerland. During the war, the Zurich Schauspielhaus had been a refuge for German actors and directors, and so it was not entirely accidental that the principal German-language playwrights of the decade after the war (1945-1955) were Swiss whose plays were first done at the Schauspielhaus: Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt. ...it is probably necessary for German playwrights today to be post-Brecht, that is, to have had the Brecht experience /Bentley's italics/, and this Frisch and Dürrenmatt could and did have, years ahead of their colleagues in Germany: hence their head start in the drama of the post-war era.¹

There were few older theatrical personalities who returned to Germany in the post-war years; for most of those who were still alive, Germany held no enticement. Bentley continues with observations about the general state of the theatre:

It is nice that Erwin Piscator is back, directing in Berlin, but where are the young Piscators? ...no equally talented younger generation has shown itself. Or should one say: been allowed to show itself? Part of the problem is what a Berlin newspaper has called the 'closed society' of Germany - and especially Berlin - theatre. A good many refugees have not chosen to return, and others have tried to return, only to find themselves far from welcome. There are very few Jews around, and Jews were the life and soul of German theatre in its great period (1900-1933).²

Those playwrights who did return after the war included Carl Zuckmayer, the only pre-war dramatist to retain any of his old power; Bertolt Brecht, who organized his theatre in Berlin but wrote no more important plays and died in 1956; Friedrich Wolf, totally disillusioned and unproductive up to his death in 1953; Ferdinand Bruckner, who never regained his stature and died in 1958. Gerhart Hauptmann, the only major dramatist to remain in Nazi Germany, atoned for his indiscretions with his Atreid, but died soon after in 1946. Franz Werfel and Georg Kaiser were both still writing significantly until their deaths in 1945, one in California, the

other in Switzerland. Ernst Toller, Stefan Zweig, and Walter Hasenclever had committed suicide during the war. Thus, Germany would have to start anew in the development of a native drama. The young men to come out of the war were bewildered and had first to gain a world perspective denied them in Hitlerian isolation; the older men who were unable to speak before had to establish themselves as new writers when they were already middle-aged. The dilemma was apparent in other areas of the drama, as Kenneth Tynan points out in 1953:

Drama in Germany is a wounded art, still recovering from the casualties it suffered between 1933 and 1945...something is missing ...a whole age group has almost disappeared; there are hardly any actors in their forties.³

The major vacuum, however, was in the field of playwriting for, aside from the plays of Frisch and Dürrenmatt, very few post-war German dramas have been recognized for their artistic value. German playwrights attempted to comprehend the sordid events of the War by interpreting them in a grotesque, often comical vein, or by writing serious parables. Until 1960, the leading dramatists - Tankred Dorst, Peter Hirsch, Leopold Ahlsen, Gert Hofmann, Herbert Asmodi, and Richard Hey - avoided political writing in the tradition of Piscator and Brecht. It was not until the 1960's that other German playwrights came to the fore with dramas of political import and a high calibre of craft.

It is difficult to determine all the causes leading to the sudden emergence of Documentary Drama in post-war Germany. However, two major influences are evident: the Eichmann trial and the Epic Theatre of Piscator and Brecht. Until 1961, the year of the Eichmann trial, there

were no Documentary Dramas in Germany. It is significant, then, that the Documentary Drama emerged after the Eichmann trial and that these plays were written by relatively unknown artists.

The Israeli government viewed the Eichmann trial as a universal drama, and its intention was to turn what was too quickly becoming history into a subject of immediate concern. The trial had its effect. The massive reports produced by the modern international communications system brought the grotesque events of the War to every nation in the world. In Germany, the Eichmann trial served as a reminder to a newly prosperous people that the crimes committed by their countrymen had not died with the victims. The dispersal of facts uncovered by the Eichmann Trial and political pressure forced the German government to pursue and bring to trial many Nazis who had already assumed respectable roles in the new German society. Thus, the Eichmann Trial generated in Germany itself a series of trials and reports which centered on the recent German past. It also became the subject of books, diaries, and studies, among them Hannah Arendt's polemical Eichmann in Jerusalem (1962), which again set off an international chain reaction.

Form (the grand inquiry, reportage, testimonies, the trial as setting) and content (moral and political responsibility) of the Eichmann trial contributed to the awakening of certain German dramatists, most of whom belong to a generation old enough to have lived through the Hitler regime.⁴ These writers reacted against the ordinary fictional theatre in favor of the dynamic political one. They are men whose source material is factual information, not metaphors. This political stage was long ago formulated

by Piscator and Brecht, and their productions have exercised a powerful influence upon Kipphardt, Weiss, and Hochhuth, and many other contemporary German dramatists, as maintained in the following tribute paid to Piscator by Kipphardt in 1966:

The hour has come to tell you, dear Erwin Piscator, that we all stem from your Hoppla, We Live!, from your Rasputin, from your Schweik. From your theatre of the Nollendorfplatz, from the radical lean endeavours of your life, from your triumphs, from your defeats, from the inalterable substance of your work. Wherever the present-day theatre attempts to describe the reality of our world in its transformations, wherever it sets out in search of the causes of their disquieting sufficiency in order to make them comprehensible and to pave the way for corrections, wherever it denounces their blood-stained, deceitful and bloated visage, there are revealed the guiding threads born of your work in the revolutionary political theatre, of that immense pioneer's building site which remained, unfinished, incomplete, provisional. For the task involved was not that of a single man and of a few years, but that of a theatre commensurate with our scientific age.⁵

or, more simply stated:

I believe that your dramatic labours, which corresponded to the exigencies of the period, effectively called forth and encouraged a new form of play.⁶

The influence of Epic Drama on Hochhuth, Kipphardt, and Weiss is evident in their various plays. Kipphardt, who was Dramaturg of the Deutsches Theater in East Berlin while Brecht was still alive, shows a partiality for 'alienation' through sharp variation of language and staging devices. Hochhuth resembles Piscator in his treatment of a theme in Epic style and in his use of character types for pedagogical purposes. Weiss's choice of the poetic and episodic form in The Investigation and his emphasis on social and political obligation are also related to the Epic style. But what these dramatists have in common with Piscator and Brecht is primarily a strong social conscience and a desire to effect

social awareness through drama. Like their predecessors, they have a special interest in the technical aspects of their plays; and they develop ideas to confront the problems of their day.

The emergence of documentation after the war was but one symptom of the return to functional theatre, to a neue Sachlichkeit which was by no means restricted to theatre and drama. It was an attack on the idea of art as something entirely of its own kind: no poems were possible after the atrocities of Auschwitz. The demands for a factual approach were felt with particular urgency; faith in language had to be restored through factual information. The situation demanded extreme sobriety in the use of language and watchfulness against the semantic dislocations of the Nazi era. The recent past was heavy with themes and subject-matter that could neither be bypassed nor fictionalized.

Documentary Drama Defined

In Brecht's drama, the statement is made by means of fable. This seems to have been a defensive procedure: censorship could be forestalled by means of allegory. The upsurge of Documentary Drama came about in a different climate, for it was conditioned by a lack of restriction. It is aggressive by nature, presenting counterfactuals to challenge the facts distributed by the mass media. However, discussion of a critical analysis of Documentary Drama must begin with the admission that the term 'Documentary' is very imprecise.⁷ Erwin Piscator used the term in a program note for The Deputy (1963)⁸ as a bridge to his own Epic documentaries in the twenties (p. 35, n. 92) and hailed Hochhuth as the chief proponent of the new Documentary Drama, claiming that the "documentary and the

artistic have merged indissolubly."⁹ However, it is Hochhuth's belief that every dramatist who sets out to write an historical play has to study all relevant documents, a fact which makes 'Documentary Drama' a nebulous term in so far as his dramas are concerned. Martin Esslin discussed this issue with Hochhuth in the following interview:

Did this mean, I asked Hochhuth, that he believes in the Theatre of Fact, the Theatre of Documentation? He answered, 'No. I became the champion of Documentary Theatre quite unintentionally. I only noticed what had happened when Piscator /who directed the first production of The Deputy/ wrote a program note in which he used the term Documentary Theatre. I am very unhappy about that catch phrase, for I believe it means very little. Pure documentation can never be more than a bunch of documents. Something must always be added /Esslin's italics/ to make a play.'¹⁰

One can understand Hochhuth's unhappiness when considering Dan Isaac's definition of the term: "the distinction to be made between Epic Theatre and Theatre of Fact is in the latter's reliance on documents for dialogue."¹¹ Rather than depending totally on documents, Hochhuth invents some dialogue and settings in both The Deputy and The Soldiers (1967). Thus his plays belong more truly to the tradition of Epic Theatre, or as Esslin states: "He /Hochhuth/ is anything but a Documentary playwright. He is a very impressive, traditional historical dramatist."¹² Kipphardt also creates dialogue and settings in his play, In The Matter Of J. Robert Oppenheimer (1964), and these inventions when mixed with testimony can be deceiving, an aspect which has proved to be one of the more controversial criticisms of the genre. It is not until the appearance of Weiss's The Investigation (1965) that total Documentary Drama, with dialogue taken only from documents, was achieved. In his extensive definition of Documentary Drama Weiss makes

this distinction: "Documentary Theatre refrains from all invention; it takes authentic material and puts it on the stage, unaltered in content, /but/ edited in form."¹³ These distinguishing characteristics between the Documentary works of Hochhuth, Kipphardt, and Weiss will be noted, but for the purpose of this study, all will be considered Documentary Drama.

In his definition Weiss concludes that Documentary Drama is a theatre of reportage based exclusively on factual reality. Considerable research is done by the playwright on authentic material that consists of the following:

Records, documents, letters, statistics, market-reports, statements by banks and companies, government statements, speeches, interviews, statements by well-known personalities, newspaper and broadcast reports, photos, documentary films and other contemporary documents...¹⁴

Weiss' definition of Documentary Drama (above, n. 13) precludes the use of fictionalized dialogue, but both he and others writing within the genre do utilize some degree of such dialogue. Of the heterogeneous mass of material listed above (n. 14) only a selection "based on a definite theme, generally of a social or political character"¹⁵ is presented on the stage. Donald Freed describes all the plays of this genre as focusing on the battle between man and the State, "man against man - actually - man against himself."¹⁶ The playwright generally desires to inform his audiences about the causes of the most important events which shape their lives and about the indirect connections between their lives and these events. As stated by Weiss, the Documentary playwright believes that the general public cannot or should not form political opinions

on the basis of the inadequate information provided by the mass media which are controlled by "groups who are interested in a policy of obscurantism and opacity."¹⁷ The dramatically effective presentation of well-documented facts is the author's chief way to prove his assumption that "reality, however opaque it may appear, can be explained in every detail."¹⁸ The playwright hopes, once people understand the delicate balance between social, moral, political, and economical problems in the society of man, they will take the responsibility of active participation in their own society by whatever means available to them.

Although relevancy is sought by the Documentary playwright, this does not necessarily limit his subject matter to contemporary history. The main body of Documentary dramas does treat contemporary themes, but efforts to plunge further back into history are by no means non-existent. The discourses of Weiss on Angola and Vietnam trace five hundred and twenty-five hundred years of history, respectively, though the playwright has attempted documentary coverage only for the fairly recent past. The past is examined in order to show how victorious governing powers distort historical facts to reflect the virtues of their own political viewpoints. In preparing for his Documentary examinations Weiss asks the following critical questions:

Why is an historical figure, a period, or an epoch, eliminated from the history books? Whose position is strengthened by this suppression of historical facts? Are reports in the press, radio and TV slanted to the point of view of powerful interests? What are we not told? Who benefits by the omissions? To whose advantage is it when certain social phenomena are blue-pencilled, modified, idealized?¹⁹

By exposing past abuses of power the dramatist hopes to prevent the duplication of such tyranny in the future. Thus, in addition to reporting the results of the author's historical research, the Documentary Drama attempts to be "an instrument for forming political opinion"²⁰ and as such it must provoke the thinking of the audience:

Documentary Drama is valueless if it is afraid of definitions, if it shows only the conditions and not the causes under-lying them, and if it does not reveal the need to eliminate these conditions and the possibilities of doing so, and is thus a Documentary Drama which remains frozen in an attitude of wild attack without actually hitting the opponent.²¹

This corresponds to Piscator's own attempts to educate the audience towards political awareness and individual responsibility (pps. 8 and 18) as stated in his views on Epic Theatre:

The mission of the present-day [1929] theatre cannot consist solely, however, in relating historic events as such. It must draw valid lessons for the present from these events, take on the import of a warning by evincing fundamentally true political and social relationships, and thus attempt, within the limits of our forces, to intervene in the course of history. We do not conceive the theatre solely as the mirror of the age, but as a means of transforming it.²²

As a method of transforming society through edification, both the Epic and Documentary dramas focus on involving the audience in active mental participation. Discussion of audience involvement in Piscator's theatre appears on pages 18 and 19 and is covered by Weiss in the following statement:

Documentary Theatre can also draw the spectator into the action, which is not possible in the real court room. The spectator can be put into the place of the accused or of the accuser; he can become a member of a committee or enquiry; he can contribute to the understanding of a complex situation or provoke opposition.²³

In order to involve the audience, the Documentary dramatist is aware of the necessity of speaking the viewers' language in an identifiable medium, and thus often borrows techniques from the modern communications media and uses these tools to create the illusion of reportage. Through the employment of tape recordings, loud speakers, records, placards, and movie splices, the dramatist seeks to bind his audience to twentieth-century reality, just as Piscator had done in his Epic theatre (pps. 13 and 14). The atmosphere is charged with a pedagogical undercurrent which warns the audience against the repetition of conditions they see enacted before them. However, the playwright realizes there is little chance of actual reform, as the following statement by Hochhuth reflects:

"One must strive to achieve a real improvement in the world. ...I am deeply pessimistic about the feasibility of such improvements, but that does not mean one should not try."²⁴

Hochhuth's concern for 'improvement in the world' reflects a general interest in mankind as opposed to a limited interest in individual people or countries. This cosmopolitan attitude is held by most Documentary dramatists, including Kipphardt, who states that this genre should be:

...aimed at the representation of reality as a whole in order to change it in such a manner that it should be better suited and more agreeable to man, that his material liberation, regarded as one of the preliminaries to his spiritual freedom, should be assured.²⁵

However, while the various issues examined by Documentary dramatists are generally of universal importance, universality is not always accomplished, as exemplified by the experience of David Wright:

Two years ago I saw in New York this very modest Documentary dealing with the negroes' position in American society /In White America/. Tailored for a liberal Manhattan audience it was an enormous success and the press notices suggested a work somewhere in the Aeschylus-Shakespeare-Brecht²⁶ league. Transferred last year to London, it raised not a ripple.

The dramatist's expositions stem from personal political convictions and are based on careful research. Indeed, a Documentary drama frequently includes an appendix or bibliography to substantiate its contentions. Since the author takes pains to 'document' his play, he has the unenviable glory of being attacked by both historian and drama critic. The historian condemns the playwright for misrepresenting the 'truth,' and the drama critic complains that the Documentary play lacks aesthetic values.

For an historian, 'truth' requires substantiated facts and even facts have colors. Although objectivity may be the honestly stated aim of a playwright/compiler, advocate feelings may slip into the evidence unbeknownst to him. Thereupon individuals are tricked into accepting positions and arguments by virtue of the authenticity of the documents which they are built around. Thus, subjectivity plays the dominant role in the initial choice of documented material, in the occasional addition of interpretative or connective material, and finally in the arrangement of the compiled information. This is not necessarily a negative aspect of the genre, as David Wright points out: "The theatre documentary that threatens with the premise, 'That's just how it was; we haven't invented a thing!' is a bad documentary because it presumes a God-like prescience."²⁷ Objectivity, then, is not only improbable, but the use of the term by a playwright may be self-serving:

Documentary Theatre takes sides. Many of its themes inevitably demand and assume judgement. In such a theatre, objectivity is likely to be merely a concept used by a ruling group to justify its actions.²⁸

Piscator also recognized the incongruity of an impartial political theatre:

If it wishes to accomplish its pedagogic mission, the political drama must not take the individual as its starting point but the document. It must not depart from the least affective attitude it can attain, from an objective attitude with regard to the characters; it must be objective on the basis of a materialistic conception of history, and not on that of an impossible 'neutrality.'²⁹

As a political genre, then, 'Documentary' denotes the mode of portrayal, not the quality. As such, the Documentary reports facts, but only certain facts, and it investigates, but only those issues which interest the author. The historian is therefore somewhat justified in his concern for the truth, especially if the playwright claims 'objectivity' and/or 'truth,' neither of which are feasible under such complex circumstances.

The issue raised by the drama critics questions the very acceptability of the genre as an art form. Even Weiss cautions against turning the stage into a political forum without regard for artistic achievement:

A Documentary Theatre which is to be a political forum first of all, and which renounces aesthetic considerations, calls its right to exist into question. It would be more effective for its members to take part in practical political activity outside the theatre. Only when it has transmuted the reality it has laid bare by its own probing and criticizing into an artistic form can it achieve true validity in dealing with that reality.³⁰

In studying the Documentary works of Hochhuth, Kipphardt, and Weiss, it becomes evident that the creative process is essential to the production of effective Documentary dramas. The author combines the tasks of scholar and playwright. He studies historical events and attempts to understand their pertinence to contemporary society. He extracts his

dialogue from source documents and shapes this data to correspond to his private conception of these events, and when he is successful, the Documentary dramatist can compose an artistic chronicle of actual occurrences that serve an educational and aesthetic purpose.

Comparison of Genres

In comparing the Documentary genre with other dramatic genres, it becomes clear that the Documentary is primarily yet another dispute with escapist entertainment. While Social Realism, Naturalism, and the Living Newspaper are opposed to escapism and the Romantic mode of portrayal, the Documentary Theatre differs from these genres in that the latter does not deal with

...the banal or quotidian smudges of life. Rather it has to do with the colossal, the overarching new myth of Evil: the titanic symbol of the camps; the assassination of a leader; murder while 'good people' look on; mighty nation states pitted against small scapegoats...³¹

or, as stated by Weiss:

Documentary Theatre is concerned with what is typical as opposed to mere externals, and does not deal with stage-characters and backgrounds. It is concerned with groups, with areas of influence, with tendencies.³²

Dan Isaac further distinguishes the Living Newspaper from Documentary Drama by the latter's entrance into the courtroom and its use of direct testimony.³³ The purpose of edification and social change make the Documentary antithetical to the dramatic genres which take their own despair and anger as their central theme, advocating a world which is not only absurd but offers no way out. However, Donald Freed presents an interesting thesis that Theatre of Fact really is Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty because

one cannot change the past, one only experiences it once again.³⁴ Nevertheless, the discriminating factors of form and content refute such an analogy.

There is less contrast between Epic Theatre and Documentary Theatre, as might be expected considering their similarities of purpose and the influence of Piscator and Brecht on the Documentary playwrights. The chief distinction between the two, as previously discussed, is the use of documented materials to constitute the main body of dramatic dialogue in the latter. A comparison of the uses of certain dramatic features by playwrights dealing with Naturalistic, Epic and Documentary Drama will distinguish these genres even further. Naturalism may be defined as the movement flourishing from 1880 to 1905 in which the drama, according to Emile Zola's essay "Naturalism in the Theatre" (1881), was based on the following criteria: men and women are portrayed as products of heredity and environment; the characters' actions are dictated by instinct rather than by reason; and the characters are understood primarily in terms of the physiological and psychological laws to which they are subject.

General observations can be drawn regarding the importance such playwrights attach to: 1) the structural elements of plot, character, theme, language, and spectacle; 2) the analysis of factual data; and 3) the extent of dramatic 'characterization.' While any one drama may totally refute the characteristics of its particular classification, these tables are drawn up to indicate general tendencies concerning dominant elements in each specified genre. The following table might constitute in declining order the varying emphasis of structural emphasis in three major theatre forms.

Table I: Emphasis Given Dramatic Elements

<u>Naturalistic Theatre</u>	<u>Epic Theatre</u>	<u>Documentary Theatre</u>
Character	Theme	Theme
Plot & Theme	Spectacle & Plot	Language
Language	Language	Character & Plot
Spectacle	Character	Spectacle

The Naturalistic Drama gives major dramatic emphasis to the delineation of a milieu of characters, who in turn may represent certain societal groups or classes. When the Naturalistic playwright concentrates on the sociology and psychology of the individual, he uses a tight construction in which the plot arises from factors in the characters and their environments. The structure thus is a reflection of deterministic philosophy. The plot, or depiction of action, and theme, or dominant message, while often clearly delineated, are generally considered as secondary to the concentration on character and social environment. The plot is frequently dealt with in an Aristotelian manner with scenes causally related, exhibiting a unity of action. Unity of time is frequently employed, as the entire play often takes place within the time-span the action would actually take. Themes and arguments are definitely advanced in Naturalistic plays, but in order to present these ideas the playwright spends the first two-thirds of the play presenting appropriate background material through total concentration on the individual psychologies of representative characters. Language takes on tertiary emphasis as the Naturalist discusses openly subjects which had hitherto been considered too controversial or salacious for the delicate ears of the theatre-goer. The playwright pulls no verbal punches, flailing away with direct and frank dialogue

which depicts characters using the authentic speech of the society they represent. Spectacle is reduced to fourth place on the scale of emphasis, although the Naturalistic movement gave spectacle a new importance in production because of the scientifically inspired concern with environment as a conditioning force in determining behavior. While spectacle thus assumes an organic, psychological role in the theatre, it nevertheless plays the subordinate role as a reinforcement to the meaning of the play and as an expository device to relate character to the social milieu.

Epic Drama has a main idea or message which elevates the theme to primary emphasis. The Epic style is a deliberate attempt to break with the Naturalistic tradition, to move away from the focus on deterministic philosophy and individual characters, and consider instead the dynamics of social change. Since Piscator and Brecht were men with messages, they utilized all the resources of the stage as visual aids to communicate their ideas. This gives spectacle secondary emphasis (as opposed to tertiary emphasis it receives in Naturalistic Theatre), with the devices of visual projections, amplified narration, music, dance, and unconcealed mechanical devices of production used as anti-illusory elements in order that the spectator will view alertly the message before him. The plot is treated similarly, as segments or fragments of action are presented with little regard of the unities and even occasional occurrences of simultaneous action. Thus, the playwright avoids creating suspense and emotion in hopes that the audience will retain control of its critical faculties. Language is used to communicate ideas rather than as a

reflection of a social milieu through ungrammatical or frank usage. To insure against illusion, narration is used and scenes are short episodes punctuated with songs and speeches. Often spectacle and the progression of plot dominate the stage, dwarfing or competing with characters for the audience's attention. Thus, character normally receives the least emphasis as a dramatic element. With the emphasis on message a new style of acting is called for, one in which the actor's objectivity is emphasized. Brecht for example frequently compared the actor in his theatre with the role of a 'witness' asked to vividly recreate an incident. Theoretically, then, the Epic Theatre focuses on a central theme by presenting drama which stresses a theatrical approach to spectacle, plot and character, which in turn activates the judgement of the spectator and enables him to relate his experience in the theatre to social and moral conditions encountered outside.

In Documentary Drama, the characters and plot are taken from historical events and thus the course of action is predetermined. Primary emphasis, then, is given to the significance of these events as seen from the playwright's point of view, although he strives for objectivity by presenting both sides of controversial issues. Like the Epic playwright, his dramas do not present individual conflicts, but struggles between opposing socio-economic forces. However, the Epic Theatre focuses on a visual representation of these struggles, while the Documentary presents the conflict verbally through debate and investigation, thus giving secondary emphasis to language. Diction is used as a forensic means of analysis and description. Characters present the issues and expose

points of view, thus adding substance to contemporary dialogue. Character and plot receive tertiary emphasis relegated to language in Epic Theatre. By virtue of historical authenticity, the element of character is given new significance, although historical persons usually appear on the stage not in their own right, but as representatives of various aspects of moral and social issues. The courtroom is often chosen as a setting so that the author can conduct his examination of facts in an appropriate environment, in which case testimonies of witnesses serve as scenes or transition for flashbacks. In most Documentary plays, scenes are short and episodic, culminating in the verification of the dramatist's thesis, as in Epic Theatre. Facts are stated, discussed, illustrated, and interpreted, with more attention paid to the nuances between right and wrong, good and evil, the oppressed and the oppressor, than is given in the Epic Drama. However, the mere recital of facts and figures, no matter how pertinent and shocking, will not sustain the spectator's interest for two or three hours, or produce audience involvement. The dramatist aims for the necessary emotional involvement - without sacrificing deliberation and reflection - by alternately presenting individual fates and general statements. In this manner the audience is subject to alternate types of response: a very strong emotional involvement with a given character, and the intellectual act of comprehending pertinent facts and figures. Interest is thus accomplished without a total purgation of emotion. As Documentary Drama lacks the overt theatricality of Epic Theatre, spectacle is given less emphasis. Courtroom scenes put a severe limitation on the use of stage

machinery, and although film, music, and placards are used, they ultimately serve theme, character and plot rather than dominate them.

Table II: Analysis of Factual Data

<u>Naturalistic Theatre</u>	<u>Epic Theatre</u>	<u>Documentary Theatre</u>
Fiction adapted from Factual Data	Fiction & Some Fact adapted from Factual Data	Fact selected from Factual Data
Data Based on Behavioral Sciences	Data Based on Historical Events	Data Based on Documented Historical Events
Data Collected by Observation	Data Collected by Research & Observation	Data Collected by Research

Documentary dramatists generally employ events primarily for their historical, political, and socio-economical significance to the contemporary situation and secondarily for their intrinsic dramatic value. The essential facts of an event are presented with less rather than more adaptation and compression. For an Epic drama, the writer selects both human beings and events for their historical as well as their dramatic weight. In this genre facts are observed and then adapted for the enhancement of dramatic expression. Rather than adhering strictly to authenticated facts, the Epic dramatist invents fictitious characters and incidents, telescopes historical events, and translocates historical personages and incidents. The author of Naturalistic drama also invents fictitious characters and incidents, telescopes historical events, and translocates historical personages and incidents. The author of Naturalistic drama also invents fictitious characters and incidents but his factual data is based on scientific observation of people in general rather than a research of specific historical figures and events. He selects facts for their

dramatic value and often for their relevancy to contemporary situations. It can be observed, in short, that all three genres adapt factual data for dramatic purposes but differ in source of data and method of application.

Since historical, political, and socio-economical issues are paramount in the Documentary drama, the writer follows authenticated records closely in showing the external facts of what happened and when. And since the issues are of 'public' concern, the characters' actions and words are usually shown in the light of their 'public' context. Rarely does the Documentary writer penetrate deeply into the personal side of a character's life. Thus, the Documentary dramatist researches actual persons and events and structures a drama which consists primarily of authenticated records of historical data.

Having received his inspiration from Darwin and Freud, the Naturalistic dramatist attempts to follow the basic concepts drawn from the scientific method. He is devoted to the sanctity of facts and the deduction of truth based on the evidence of collected data. It is his mission to see, hear, and report everything. Such an emphasis on observation not only affects his choice of subject matter, but it also affects his method of handling it. He penetrates the personal or inner life of his leading characters; he allows the plot to develop according to the logic of his characters; he depicts the environment and its atmosphere with scrupulous fidelity; he concerns himself with people rather than plot; he is faithful to the facts as he observes them. Nevertheless, the characters and situations he creates are fictional and only suggest actuality by giving the impression of a truthful interpretation of life. The Naturalistic dramatist, then

collects factual data through methodical observation of life and creates a drama of fiction based on the behavioral sciences.

The Epic Drama fluctuates between these two genres, depending on the approach taken in each individual play. However, generalizations may be made concerning a majority of the plays. The Epic drama advocates that man and society are not fixed and unalterable, but constantly changing and capable of being bettered through the exercise of reason based on objective observation. Political and socio-economical issues are examined through research of historical fact as well as observation of contemporary circumstances, but in order to estrange the materials for didactic purposes, the characterizations and situations are fictionalized. Epic Drama, therefore, is generally fiction based on historical, political, and/or socio-economical data that has been recorded or observed in the reality of life.

Table III: Extent of Characterization

<u>Naturalistic Theatre</u>	<u>Documentary Theatre</u>	<u>Epic Theatre</u>
Complexity	Simplification	Simplification
Depth	Surface	Surface
Self-revealing	Self-revealing	Exposited
	Expository	
Participant in Events	Participant & Expositor of Events	Expositor of Events
More Development	More Development	Less Development
More Self-revelatory	More Self-revelatory	Less Self-revelatory
Interaction with	Interaction with	Interaction with
Other Characters	Other Characters	Other Characters

With the Epic Drama the writer not only finds it less possible to develop character complexity and growth, but also not as necessary to his overall purpose. His character must be subordinate to the thesis

and to the depiction of significant events. Because he is important only insofar as he is related to the development of the theme, little of the character's action will be self-revealing. Rather, the character will serve, as Table III diagrams, to exposit facts concerning events and predict their outcome. Time-consuming, character-revealing action within or among the episodes is not often possible. The writer is forced therefore to distinguish his characters by a few easily recognizable traits and no more. Collectively, then, the presentational and structural features of the Epic form contribute largely to a simplified, metaphorical character rather than a fully dimensioned 'individual.'

The character emerges in the Naturalistic Drama as a more complex and three-dimensional personality than that possible in the Epic Drama. The character voices more complex feelings and ideas; and general intensiveness of the plot in the Naturalistic Drama allows him character-revealing action through more intimate interrelationships with other characters. He is less obligated than in the other two genres to exposit events or predict their future significance. When actions are shown, they are depicted with the aim of revealing the character's thoughts and beliefs, rather than for their own intrinsic interest. In sum, the individualized character of the Naturalistic Drama appears far more complex than the simplified character of the Epic Drama.

The Documentary dramatist does not strive for authentic representations of historical figures. The historical figure tends to frequently be extensions of the playwright's argument rather than fully developed characters. He must often function, influenced by the Epic Drama, as an

expositor of events and sometimes as a prognosticator of their future significance. Depth of characterization, somewhat restricted, is pulled away from Naturalistic Drama. The use of flashbacks, nevertheless, enables the character to be delineated in action. The playwright can also show development of character through interaction with other characters, to bring out salient human traits, especially in the protagonist. With the Documentary a writer is able to mold characters of more dimension and vitality than in the Epic Drama, but they are still likely to be a concentration of simplified traits and not, as in Naturalistic Drama, deeply plumbed.

Between the poles of Epic Drama and of Naturalistic Drama stands the Documentary Drama; it is helpful to regard it as an amalgam of both of these genres yet possessing its own individuality. The pulls of both Epic Drama and Naturalistic Drama operate on the Documentary dramatist: as previously noted the demands for magnification and adherence to a preconceived image in the historical figure often result in idealization to a point where the character's individualization as a human personality is weakened;³⁵ conversely, the demands for theatrical richness and appeal yield universal human qualities that serve to extend the characterization. In the hands of competent playwrights, characterization in the Documentary Drama can borrow the human vitality and expressiveness of the Naturalistic Drama and blend it with the magnification and typification of the Epic Drama. The result is a stage personality which has the strength and grandeur to inhabit the world of the Documentary.

To examine more closely salient characteristics of the Documentary Drama, three full-length Documentary works of German playwrights will be analyzed: The Deputy by Rolf Hochhuth; In The Matter Of J. Robert Oppenheimer by Heinar Kipphardt; and The Investigation by Peter Weiss. As the number of Documentary dramas in existence is considerable, these playwrights have been chosen on the basis of their unique position as having been the only Documentary dramatists to have had their first works of this genre produced by the 'grandfather' of the movement, Erwin Piscator.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER II

- ¹Eric Bentley. What Is Theatre?. (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 415.
- ²Ibid., pp. 421-422.
- ³Kenneth Tynan. Curtains. (New York: Atheneum, 1961), p. 454.
- ⁴Most of the German playwrights who have been concerned with politics were born during the 1920's: Heinar Kipphardt (1922), Rolf Hochhuth (1931), Peter Weiss (1916), Martin Walser (1927), Siegfried Lenx (1927), Günter Grass (1927), and Peter Hacks (1928).
- ⁵Heinar Kipphardt. "Heinar Kipphardt Pays Tribute to Erwin Piscator." World Theatre. (1968, Vol. 17), Rene Hainaux, Editor, p. 303.
- ⁶Ibid., p. 309.
- ⁷Despite the predominance of the term 'Theatre of Fact' in Anglo-American usage, I have opted for the greater value-freedom of 'Documentary Drama/Theatre.' (An unexposed perjurious statement, in records, is document rather than fact.)
- ⁸Parenthesized dates refer to first productions.
- ⁹Erwin Piscator. "Introduction to The Deputy." op. cit., p. 15.
- ¹⁰Martin Esslin. Reflections. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1969), p. 133.
- ¹¹Dan Isaac. "Theatre of Fact." Tulane Drama Review. (1971, Vol. 15, Summer), p. 133.
- ¹²Martin Esslin. op. cit., p. 138.
- ¹³Peter Weiss. "The Material and the Models." Theatre Quarterly. (1971, Vol. 1, January-March), p. 41.
- ¹⁴Ibid.
- ¹⁵Ibid.
- ¹⁶Donald Freed. "Peter Weiss and The Theatre of the Future." Drama Survey. (1967, Vol. 6, Fall), p. 124.
- ¹⁷Peter Weiss. op. cit., p. 41.
- ¹⁸Ibid., p. 43.
- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 41.

²⁰Ibid., p. 42.

²¹Ibid., p. 43.

²²Erwin Piscator as quoted in "Heinar Kipphardt Pays Tribute to Erwin Piscator." op. cit., p. 303.

²³Peter Weiss. op. cit., p. 43.

²⁴Rolf Hochhuth as quoted in Reflections. op. cit., p. 134.

²⁵Heinar Kipphardt. op. cit., p. 305.

²⁶David Wright. "Documentary Theatre." Plays and Players. (1966, Vol. 14, December), p. 61.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Peter Weiss. op. cit., p. 42.

²⁹Erwin Piscator as quoted in "Heinar Kipphardt Pays Tribute to Erwin Piscator." op. cit., p. 307.

³⁰Peter Weiss. op. cit., p. 42.

³¹Donald Freed. op. cit., p. 148.

³²Peter Weiss. op. cit., p. 42.

³³Dan Isaac. op. cit., p. 109.

³⁴Donal Freed. op. cit., p. 120.

³⁵Rolf Zimmerman describes The Deputy as having "no 'normal' characters and types, but only experimental individuals, experiments, and the two factors crucial for the outcome of the experiments - knowledge and conscience. It rejects psychological relativism just as much as historical relativism." Rolf Zimmerman. "Drama or Pamphlet." The Storm Over THE DEPUTY. op. cit., p. 127.

CHAPTER III: DOCUMENTARY DRAMA EXEMPLIFIED

An Approach

The analysis of three exemplary Documentary dramas which follows will focus on the structural elements of theme, plot and diction. As the Documentary dramatists' treatment of character is based on historical fact rather than creative imagination, the structural element of character will receive less attention, as will the director-controlled elements of spectacle and music. Each drama will be examined in regard to the author's use of historical data as it pertains to the Documentary ideal. Biographical data and philosophical viewpoints of each author will be given, although information on Kipphardt is limited in English and thus prevents a thorough examination of his background and philosophy. Some observations may be made concerning critical response to the plays, but, in general, this study will be confined to a literary analysis of each drama.

Rolf Hochhuth

It is not often that a play can rock a great establishment. But Rolf Hochhuth has achieved this rare feat not once but twice. In 1963 he caused a disturbance in the Vatican with the presentation of The Deputy, in which he suggests that Pope Pius XII had put expediency before principle in refraining from intervening with Hitler on behalf of the German and European Jews during World War II. Four years later with The Soldiers, in which he represents Winston Churchill as instigating

the death in 1943 of General Sikorski, head of the Polish government-in-exile, he provoked heart-searching and controversy in establishment Britain.

Born April 1, 1931 in Eschwege, Germany to a shoe-factory owner and his wife, Hochhuth was raised in Eschwege as a German Protestant (Evangelical Church), studied bookselling at a vocational school, and attended universities in Marburg, Munich, and Heidelberg. Married, with two sons, Hochhuth's career has progressed from a city-hall runner directly following the war to a reader for a publisher, an assistant director for the Municipal Theater in Gassel, Switzerland, a writer of prose, and finally a playwright with a rather distinctive and auspicious beginning indicated in his first and second works: The Deputy, written at the age of thirty-two, and The Soldiers, written at the age of thirty-six. For The Deputy, Hochhuth won the "Young Generation Playwright Award" of the 1963 "Berliner Kunstpreis" and shared the Gerhardt Hauptmann Prize of 1962.

Although a German playwright who writes of the German experience, Hochhuth has chosen to make his home in Basel, Switzerland, where Martin Esslin interviewed him in 1967:

I spent an afternoon and evening with Hochhuth at his home, a modest apartment in a suburb of Basel, shortly after his return from the Berlin premiere /of The Soldiers/. Hochhuth is a slight, dark young man with a lively flow of conversation, clearly someone obsessed with moral questions and overflowing with ideas. ...Although he has made a fortune from The Deputy, his style of life is utterly simple: within Basel he uses a bicycle rather than a car; his apartment occupies one floor of a typical Swiss suburban three-family house. But there are some fine original paintings on the walls, and innumerable books.¹

As a man 'obsessed with moral questions,' Hochhuth believes the theatre should serve as a moral tribunal, thus reflecting the views of Piscator following World War I (p. 5 and 27). Hochhuth sees man as capable of action, free to fulfill his own ethical and moral responsibilities as he perceives them:

I am a humanist. In other words, I still maintain a belief in the autonomy of the individual and that the individual can make some impact on the world. I repeat: my belief in the power of the individual is small. But that does not mean that one should not - without, I hope, in any way being a hypocrite - write plays about people who prove the opposite. I don't agree with those dramatists like Dürrenmatt who proclaim the end of tragedy on the ground that the day of the individual is past forever, that nobody can do anything, nobody is responsible any more. These people forget one thing: the number of those individuals who *did* /Esslin's italics/ achieve something has always been very, very small, throughout history.²

This then is the motivation behind the two plays that have stirred up such intense excitement, so much bitter controversy. Hochhuth's aim is not primarily political. His aim is to explore the human condition on the basis of verifiable human reality and to penetrate to the tragic core of man's plight on earth:

I think the terror against the Jews in our time is only one example of the terror which reigns on earth at all times, in all epochs, in every century. In every nation there are feelings that wait for a Hitler to awaken. In other centuries there was the Inquisition. Nearly all times have known horrible examples that certain groups of men were persecuted in dreadful ways.³

As a former member of a Hitler youth group and husband to a woman whose Jewish mother was decapitated by the Nazis, Hochhuth's life has been inextricably linked to the guilt-ridden young German experience, an ordeal he discusses at length in an interview with critic, Judy Stone:

As boys of the Hitler youth, we had to pick up pamphlets and leaflets dropped by the Allies. On these leaflets, it was written, 'We are not fighting the German people but the Nazis.' But we boys mocked those words because we saw dead women and children and we were impressed and hated those who had done it. The Americans who attacked Eschwege tried to find the military targets only and it was only bad luck they bombed the streets near the airport. But the English destroyed Kassel. We saw the town burning from here and my 14-year-old brother had to go there at night to help. The English didn't care where they bombed, but now I understand the English point of view. ...

The first week of the occupation was not very agreeable for the occupied. My parents and others had to leave their homes, but we were relieved because the war was over. My brother who had been taken prisoner of war by the Americans was released. And then the cruel things of the concentration camps became known. The photographs were shown in the papers and it shamed and sickened us. We didn't dare to believe...⁴

One can understand the turmoil within Hochhuth and why the shades of difference between right and wrong in his plays are not as clear-cut as some might desire: "he has been praised as a social conscience... and he has been damned variously as a Nazi, a Communist, and an Anti-Semite."⁵ However, he repudiates the suggestion that both The Deputy and The Soldiers somehow aim at absolving the Germans from the guilt of their war crimes by shifting the blame onto the Catholic Church or Churchill:

I was the first playwright who wrote a scene with Adolf Eichmann in it, at a time when the Israelis had not even captured Eichmann. I was the first playwright to put Auschwitz on a stage. That should show that I was not trying to minimize German guilt. And secondly, in the whole of West Germany The Deputy has had half as many performances as in Paris alone, fewer than in New York. The play has not been performed in Germany in the last few years, but it is still being performed in Warsaw, in Prague, in Yugoslavia. That does not seem to me to indicate that the Germans regard the play as an apologia for themselves.⁶

or, stated more simply: "The arsonist does not become less guilty because a fireman resigns in front of a great fire."⁷

Although Hochhuth writes of actual incidents and substantiates these incidents with documented evidence, he is "not interested in documents so much; the documents are raw material, the bricks with which one builds a play. One collects the bricks, but merely as a means to an end, in order to erect a structure."⁸ His plays contain direct testimony as dialogue, thus distinguishing them as Documentary Drama, but he adapts historical data more freely than recommended by Weiss, who 'refrains from all invention' (p. 54). Circumstantial evidence is also employed to a greater degree than by Kipphardt and Weiss, although Hochhuth does not ... "think that the author of historical plays is entitled to invent vital incidents. In fact, I think that in doing so he would ruin himself artistically."⁹ In order to allay suspicions that too much fiction is created out of fact, Hochhuth supplies supporting authenticated data in descriptive parenthetical passages throughout his plays and, in the case of The Deputy, sixty-five pages of "Historical Sidelights" is appended to the end:

If I submit the following notes on controversial events and testimony, it is to demonstrate that as far as possible I adhered to the facts. I allowed my imagination free play only to the extent that I had to transform the existing raw material of history into drama.¹⁰

An analysis of The Deputy will further demonstrate Hochhuth's tendency toward adaptation and invention.

The Deputy

The Deputy reads like an extremely well researched lawyer's brief in verse: two or three epigraphs precede each of the five acts, the acts themselves are divided into discreet sections and titled as if they were

chapters; discursive passages and author's asides are generously mixed in with the dialogue, and, following the play, "Historical Sidelights" are accompanied by footnotes. Performance of this published version would take six to eight hours; most actual performances last from two to three hours, with adaptations varying in quality and degrees of distortion.¹¹

The play was first performed on February 20, 1963, under the direction of Erwin Piscator at the Freie Volksbuehne, West Berlin. It was propitious in timing, arriving on the scene shortly after the Eichmann Affair and between sessions of the Vatican II Council. Repurcussions were immediate and Church officials felt the playwright had committed character assassination,¹² which is not surprising considering Hochhuth's uncompromising thesis:

A deputy of Christ
who sees these things and nonetheless
permits reasons of state to seal his lips -
who wastes even one day in thought,
hesitates even for an hour
to lift his anguished voice
in one anathema to chill the blood
of every last man on earth,
that Pope is...a criminal.¹³

The characterization of Pope Pius XII is based on the fact that the Pope never explicitly condemned Hitler's treatment of the Jews. In the play, the Pope represents all those who remained silent in the face of Nazi atrocities:

Pius is a symbol, not only for all leaders, but
for all men - Christians, atheists, Jews. For all men
who are passive when their brother is deported to death.
Pius was at the top of the hierarchy and, therefore, he
had the greatest duty to speak. But every man - the

Protestants, the Jews, Churchill, Eden, Cordell Hull, all had the duty to speak.¹⁴

Hochhuth was stimulated to begin work on the play after reading The Final Solution by Gerald Reitlinger. Following the death of Pope Pius XII in 1958, he spent three years in research in Rome (although secret Vatican archives are open only to the year 1846) and in studying the Nuremburg Trial and Wehrmacht archives. The play is a carefully constructed drama which reports incidents relating to the silence of the Pope from August, 1942, until the end of the War. The dramatis personae are mostly actual historical figures, sometimes disguised in name. The main protagonist, Jesuit Father Riccardo Fontana, is considered the most fictitious, but his character is loosely based on the two clergymen to whom the play is dedicated: Father Maximilian Kolbe, Internee No. 16670, a Polish Franciscan priest who took a Jew's place in a starvation cell at Auschwitz and died after long agony; and Provost Bernhard Lichtenberg of the Cathedral in Berlin who prayed publicly for the Jews and volunteered to accompany them to Dachau.

While Hochhuth's research was extensive, he was limited by a scarcity of documented information supporting his proposed thesis. Therefore, while many of the words the character speaks are the actual words of Pius XII as recorded and as published in the L'Osservatore Romano, the reasons given for the Pope's silence were drawn from interviews with people rather than manuscripts by the Pope himself, and thus are based on speculation and heresay. Some of the theories presented in the play concerning the Pope's silence are as follows: direct

intervention by the church into secular matters of state might bring even worse reprisals - better to do what one can behind the scenes; millions of Catholic Germans are fighting for Hitler, and they should not be confused because there is still time to save their souls; Hitler may be reprehensible, but he is Europe's last buffer against the menace of Bolshevism; if the church remains neutral, it may have a chance of negotiating the peace to come; individual prelates are free to act on their own, and are often encouraged to do so. The character of Pius also argues another motive that Hochhuth has scrupulously documented: an early collapse for Hitler might imperil Vatican investments.

The controversy over the thesis of the play was not entered into by the Vatican itself, thus giving apparent confirmation to Hochhuth's suppositions: "If the Vatican had in its archives documents to throw doubt, even only to throw doubt, on my play, they would have found them and published them."¹⁵ Actually the documents the Vatican had in its possession proved, rather than disproved, Hochhuth's thesis, as has been established by the Vatican papers published just this year. According to these papers, the Pius not only knew about the slaughter of the Jews, but his silence was dictated by some of the reasons presented in Hochhuth's play:

...The Pope wanted to remain officially neutral so that he could use his good offices to help Italy withdraw from the war...(a protest by Pius) would have done nothing, and it would have invited Nazi retaliation against the Vatican... even a silent Pontiff and a silent Vatican were better than none at all.¹⁶

The Vatican has still not released all of its records on World War II; thus, new enlightenment may be forthcoming "to quiet the moral debate

over whether Pius, in this instance, rendered too much unto Caesar."¹⁷

The main action of The Deputy is deceptively simple, which in turn may lead to distorted adaptations (p. 79, n. 11) through unscrupulous editing. Father Riccardo, while attached in 1942 to the office of the Papal Nuncio in Berlin, is apprised of the terrible happenings in the East by Gerstein, an SS captain, who is secretly anti-Nazi. After approaching various members of the Church hierarchy, Riccardo confronts the Pope personally. After the Pope refuses Riccardo's request that he take a strong public stand against the German atrocities, he signs the famous generalized platitude that was published in L'Osservatore Romano (October 25, 1943) at the time of the arrests of the Italian Jews; a pronouncement which led Hochhuth, through the words of Father Riccardo, to characterize it as fatuous, flowery, and devoid of any specifics or power. Hochhuth's Pius gets ink on his fingers in the process of signing; the Pope-as-Pilate washes his hands while Fontana accuses him of the crime of silence. The young priest, under Pius' gaze, pins a Star of David on his own cassock and goes to Auschwitz to die. The true Vicar of Christ is the man who assumes the responsibility of acting as Jesus would have. If the Pope evades the responsibility of being the Lord's representative, then for God, for church, and for humanity, another man must go as the Pope's deputy. In Riccardo's actions and character is seen the significance of the German title Der Stellvertreter (American translation: The Deputy, British translation: The Representative, French translation: The Vicar).

In his drama, Hochhuth employs free verse, as he says, to stress certain points and to remove the tones of reportage and scholarship with which his sources are saturated:

Free verse carries its speaker along much more readily than prose, especially when it concerns a subject which is so closely involved with contemporary events and depends so extensively on historical documents. Then, things must be transposed, heightened by language. Otherwise, it would often be likely to sound as if one were merely quoting from the documents.¹⁸

Still, the movement of the drama resembles an urgent report. Gerstein dashes into the Nuncio in Berlin to describe his experiences at Belzec and Treblinka; Riccardo leaves Berlin to deliver Gerstein's news to the Pope. The suspense of the play emanates from the conflicting interests of the Pope, who compromises his integrity and negates the value of communication.

In order to establish the causes for this disaster, Hochhuth conceives an elaborate framework which encompasses a cross-section of the three groups central to the drama: the Catholic clergy, the Jews, and the Germans. Acts I, III, and V have three scenes while Acts II and IV have one. In the three-scene acts, Hochhuth concentrates on the reaction of the Catholic clergy, the Jews, and the Germans to the Nazi persecution of minorities. For instance, in Act I (1942), Gerstein confronts Riccardo and the Nuncio of Berlin. The young priest is shocked when told of the concentration camps, and the Nuncio avoids the issue. In the second scene, the party at the Jägerkeller affords us a dark view of those Germans actively engaged in the Nazi annihilation program. The last scene is in Gerstein's apartment where Jacobson,

the Jew, gives vent to his angry desperation. Three scenes, three different pictures of three groups are presented whose fates are intricately meshed. Acts III and V compose the portions of the drama which provide the historical background necessary to comprehend Gerstein's passion and Riccardo's accusations.

Acts II and IV, the most polemical, discuss the politics of Pope Pius XII. These two Acts each have one scene which is set in Rome. Act II is Hochhuth's inner dialogue on the political maneuvering of the Catholic Church. Count Fontana as the well-meaning rich layman, the Cardinal as the shrewd diplomat, and Riccardo as the forthright idealist argue about the position of the Church with regard to Jews, Communism, and Nazism. After each side voices its opinion, Hochhuth concludes that the Church refused to defend the Jews because it feared the Communists more than the Nazis. Act IV probes the psyche of the Pope, and here Hochhuth analyzes those personal weaknesses which, he feels, led the Pope to act so inadequately during this crucial period.

Gerstein and Riccardo appear in the majority of the scenes. They are men on a quest and represent Hochhuth's point of view. Both are passionate in temperament and act under the assumption that nihilism can be overcome by moral energy. Wherever they go, they expose cowardice and perversity - Riccardo by his earnest and righteous appeals, Gerstein by his disturbing and ironic perceptions.

The language of the play is formulated as carefully as the structure. Hochhuth uses words to measure moral worth. Therefore, decadent earthy language is associated with the decline of Europe.

The characters of Pius and the Nuncio of Berlin tend to speak vaguely, vacuously, in a rhetoric which by its very nature is deceptive and nebulous. In general, most discussions are futile because the speakers do not comprehend what they utter, or they do not mean it. By transforming rhetoric into a moral barometer, Hochhuth can illustrate the mettle of his characters. For example, the Nuncio in Berlin demonstrates his shallowness when urged to speak out for the Jews in the city:

Nuncio (raises his hand in a gesture of abnegation;
his calm is imperturbable):
It is not my place, as Nuncio, to speak
of that /Hochhuth's italics/. When, for
example, I try to remonstrate
about conditions in Poland,
confining my protests to the mistreatment
of priests, Herr von Weizsacker, politely
shows me the door. Outside of my domain,
he says. First we must recognize the new frontiers.
Concerning Jews, he says, they'd fall within my scope
only if they were baptized.
But Herr Hitler is careful
not to deport the baptized Jews.
Ah, the Father himself
is bringing us our tea, how nice, thank you,
Might there be a bit of cake to go with it.¹⁹

Here Hochhuth delineates the evasiveness of the Nuncio who hides behind his clerical jargon, and it becomes clear that the Nuncio is a man of expedience and not of feeling. His concern for mankind extends only so far as the Bavarian Father, who has gone out of his way to bring his Excellency his tea.

The scene in the Jägerkeller is another illustration of how Hochhuth carefully structures the language of the characters. Each character at this party represents a segment of German society,

1942-1945. They drink, bowl, and make small talk out of Auschwitz. Words like 'work', 'dead', and 'responsibility' are played upon callously. The trite and merry conversations have a dimension unintended by the speakers. Only the reader (or the audience) understands the real significance of their words and is struck by their banality.

The real master of evasive speech is the Pope. In the climactic Act IV he delivers his ineffective pronouncement of the Churches' official position "almost singing the last words of his dictation"²⁰ and we see how words reveal one's moral deterioration. Riccardo is overwhelmed as the Pope consciously arranges his words to create ambiguity:

These empty phrases! Father General,
you know as well as I, he does not mean
Hitler to even notice them.
Please help!²¹

Only Riccardo has the courage to test the effectiveness of the Pope's protest message, and hence he travels to Auschwitz with the Jewish star on his cassock.

In different parts of the play, the author reproduced dialects, military language, Nazi and ecclesiastical vernacular and, in some cases, notably that of the Cardinal, characterizes individuals through their language. This differentiation of language would appear to constitute a step towards Naturalism. However, Hochhuth is not primarily interested in the characters for their own sakes, or in their environment as a conditioning factor. The characters' various functions are to explain and demonstrate the facts of the historical situation and the contemporary reaction of certain circles to them, and at the same time

to act, either directly or indirectly, as vehicles for the author's accusation. In order to arouse our empathy, Hochhuth shows us several individual fates in naturalistic detail, but this is only a means to an end, not an end in itself. The various types of speech are intended to add the dramatic effectiveness of the play and also to create an authentic atmosphere; the dialects are meant to show the wide range of people who were responsible to a greater or lesser extent for Auschwitz.

Hochhuth, then, has devised a type of verse which has enabled him to make a political drama out of his own interpretation of certain aspects of recent history. In order to convey his own emotion and arouse similar feelings in the audience he needed a more dramatic and penetrating medium than prose. At the same time, however, he is able to incorporate historical documents, facts and figures and logical arguments, as well as various realistic-sounding dialects, because his verse is not far removed from the sphere of everyday speech.

Alfred Kazin and Susan Sontag refer to The Deputy as a documentary piece of writing - not a work of art.²² Though they mean to praise Hochhuth, they slight him as an artist. Hochhuth produces a chronicle of the times mainly by refining factual material and giving it an original form. History is recast as drama, and it is as a work of art that The Deputy ultimately has its effect. The play is a passionate accusation and the author has used all the skill at his command in his attempt to transmit his sense of moral outrage to the public. He has chosen to write his play in the form which is best suited to the

task of generating emotion in the audience - that of the conventional theatre of illusion.

While Hochhuth claims to have respected history in writing his play (p. 78, n. 10), some of his characters, including the central figure of Riccardo, and the dialogue, by the mere fact it has been transcribed into verse, are fictitious, thus making a strict application of the terms 'authentic' or 'Documentary' incorrect. However, the facts and figures about the atrocities are all true, the 'background' scenes are dramatic reconstructions of actual historical situations, and most of the main protagonists have a certain authenticity in the sense that their motives, arguments, and opinions correspond to those of actual people or groups during the time the author is dealing with.

The key scene of the play - Riccardo's confrontation with the Pope - is, of course, unauthentic. There was never any confrontation of this kind, only reference to source material which Hochhuth had available to him. It is clear that the Pope knew of the deportation of the Jews, and in the appendix Hochhuth demonstrates that several appeals were made by various bodies in the hope that the Pope would publicly condemn the atrocities and rescind the concordat with Germany. Pius's attitude is symbolized in the hand-washing incident, which forms the climax of the scene. The real situation was never as clear-cut and dramatic as this, but it is an effective symbolic device.

The effectiveness of Hochhuth's accusation depends on his being able to demonstrate that the main actions and dialogues of the play do have this solid basis in history, and to a large extent he succeeds.

However, as a dramatist rather than an historian, he resorts to such dramatic devices as symbolism, effective climaxes, and character motivation. Even poetic imagination is employed in the figure of the Doctor.

It is true that in the character of the Doctor, Hochhuth does have an historical model (though he doesn't mention the name in the stage directions, he is presumably based on the notorious Dr. Mengele) but the author gives him a supernatural aura by making him into a personification of evil:

The Doctor, who carries the little swagger stick with which he toys while making his selections in Auschwitz, never bowls. Precisely because he takes so little part in what is going on, he gives the impression, even in this group of Philistines, of being the secret stage manager. If he is like the others, he is like them in the way the puppetmaster resembles his marionettes. ...He is cool and cheery - when he is not invisible. He has the stature of Absolute Evil - far more unequivocally so than Hitler, whom he no longer even bothers to despise ²³ which is his attitude toward all members of the human race.

In Act V, Hochhuth tries to underline the magnitude of the Pope's crime by showing us Auschwitz on the stage, and here the Doctor is the dominating figure. The action of this part of the play seems more arbitrary and unauthentic than that of the earlier acts. This is because the first four acts are devoted to establishing one primary idea - the Pope's guilt - whereas in Act V the author tries to express in dramatic form the horrors of Auschwitz, a task which he realizes is virtually impossible. All settings previous to this have been realistic, but this setting is surrealistic in nature:

Documentary naturalism no longer serves as a stylistic principle. So charged a figure is the anonymous Doctor, the monologues, and a number of other features, should make

it evident that no attempt was made to strive for an imitation of reality - nor should the stage set strive for it.²⁴

In the long theological argument between the Doctor and Riccardo in Scene 2, Hochhuth attempts a subjective interpretation of Auschwitz which has little to do with documented fact. The final scene is meant to drive home the author's message by showing the logical consequence of the Pope's refusal to act as the triumph of evil. It is debatable whether this scene is a fitting conclusion to the play - the impression it makes on the reader is one of crude melodrama and excessive sentimentality. However, whatever one's opinion of the final act, it does not affect the validity of the argument contained in the main body of the work.

The question of whether The Deputy is of the Documentary genre or historical drama is not easily answered. It is clear that the play does have an authentic basis in fact. However, Hochhuth employs fictitious characters, situations, and dialogue, and arranges them to prove his totally subjective thesis. He feels free to dart from fact to fiction and back again, often proving his point with 'symbolic' truth rather than authentic facts. He provides an abundance of documented material to support his inventions, but usually it is tucked away in parenthetical passages for the reader to discover. One presumes the theatre audience must research the material after seeing the play. All of these facts, plus Hochhuth's denial of the term (Documentary) (p. 53, n. 10), cloud the issue even more.

In considering this question, one must remember Hochhuth's drama is put in that rare category of 'firsts', and, as with other 'first' productions of new genres, there is a tendency to reflect previous, more established ideas and techniques. Thus Hochhuth shows the influence of Piscator's Epic tradition in his concern for social change through drama, his use of characters for didactic purposes, his emphasis on theme, and his freewheeling between fact and fiction. But he experimented with other techniques to create a new form that capitalizes on the potency of fact and reveals historical truths, thus putting The Deputy on the periphery of the Documentary genre.

Hochhuth heralded a movement that was unique to his own generation, a movement that rocked and altered the German stage and has mushroomed to international proportions. In his two plays, The Deputy and The Soldiers, he has created a larger immediate and visible impact than many other contemporary dramatists. This in itself must be regarded as a boon for the theatre as an institution and as an art form. For it indicates that, in an age of mass media, the theatre still maintains its power as a forum for the airing of moral problems, for intense political and social debate, the type of theatre Piscator championed throughout his life. In the following discussion of Heinar Kipphardt and Peter Weiss, the Documentary genre will be more clearly illustrated, its definitions more finely drawn. But Rolf Hochhuth's The Deputy should be looked on as an embryonic Documentary drama of the finest quality.

Heinar Kipphardt

Born March 8, 1922, in Heidersdorf/Schlesien, Germany, Heinar Kipphardt received his education at the Universities of Königsberg, Breslau, and Düsseldorf. He was a Doctor of Medicine before serving as the Dramaturg of the East Berlin Deutsches Theatre from 1950 to 1959. He now resides in Munich where, as a free-lance writer, he has written eight plays for the theatre (the fifth of which was In The Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer), as well as several plays for television. He has received several awards for his work, including the Gerhard Hauptmann Prize (1964) and the Adolf Grimme Prize (1964) for In The Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer. His only other Documentary drama is Joel Brand, written in 1965. His approach to the Documentary Drama conforms much more to the limitations of the genre, as will be revealed in the following discussion of In The Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer.

In The Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer

LOYALTY TO GOVERNMENT
 LOYALTY TO MANKIND²⁵
 WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE ARE PHYSICISTS?
 CAN A MAN BE TAKEN TO PEICES LIKE THE
 MECHANISM OF A FUSE?²⁶
 WHERE DOES LOYALTY TO A BROTHER END,
 AND WHERE TO THE STATE?²⁷
 GUILT THROUGH ASSOCIATION.²⁸

These are some of the themes Kipphardt explores in his play In The Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer (herein referred to as Oppenheimer) as he examines the role of the physicist in connection with the nuclear arms race. The physicist in question is J. Robert Oppenheimer, 'the father of the atomic bomb,' a title he earned from the role he played

as Director of the Scientific Laboratory at Los Alamos. In 1954 as Chairman of the General Advisory Committee of the Atomic Energy Commission he was widely criticized for delaying the development of the hydrogen bomb in a manner which had allowed the U.S.S.R. to gain ground on the United States in the nuclear arms race. At the height of the cold war, his security clearance was withdrawn and he was required to answer questions by a Personnel Security Board concerning his views, his associations, and his actions.

The play Kipphardt has created is "a play for the theatre, not an assemblance of documentary materials."²⁹ Although he uses facts and entire messages from the three thousand page transcript published by the Atomic Energy Commission in 1954, Kipphardt manages to convey the tension and conflict of that secret hearing and he presents some fundamental issues which face the world today - the conflict between the responsibility of the individual (especially the nuclear physicist) to his country and to humanity as a whole, and the right of the patriot to express views at odds with those of his government without his loyalty being called into question.

Oppenheimer consists of nine scenes which revolve around such topics as LOYALTY TO GOVERNMENT, LOYALTY TO MANKIND, etc. These theme headings are projected on a screen before each appropriate scene. Directly or indirectly, all the scenes debate the theme of the scientist in relation to government and society. The inquiry which originally took the form of a hearing against Oppenheimer is transformed essentially into the trial of the morality of pure scientific research and the consequential

uses of science by government. Using the courtroom as his setting, Kipphardt reviews the Committee that investigated Oppenheimer. He highlights part of the hearings to illustrate the techniques used by the FBI and other government agencies to obtain evidence against those they find suspicious. In the very first scene, the state's attorney Robb tries to intimidate Oppenheimer with the false testimony of a government undercover agent. For three weeks Robb and his assistant deviously try to incriminate Oppenheimer, and the physicist reflects (as must the audience) upon the role that he has played and will play with regard to the government. Oppenheimer must judge himself as well as the institution that accuses him of acting against its security. He hesitates to admit guilt:

Oppenheimer: ...It isn't the fault of the physicists that brilliant ideas always lead to bombs nowadays. As long as that is the case, one can have a scientific enthusiasm for a thing and, at the same time, as a human being, one can regard it with horror.³⁰

But, later he reconsiders this statement:

Oppenheimer: ...When I think what might have become of the ideas of Copernicus or Newton under present-day conditions, I begin to wonder whether we were not perhaps traitors to the spirit of science when we handed over the results of our research to the military, without considering the consequences. ...we, the physicists, find that we have never before been of such consequence, and that we have never before been so completely helpless. ...Contrary to this Board, therefore, I ask myself whether we, the physicists, have not sometimes given too great, too indiscriminate loyalty to our governments, against our better judgment.³¹

Through Kipphardt's rearrangement, the hearings take a unique form: the scientist under investigation becomes the investigator and pronounces sentence on himself and his associates.

Since the truth that Kipphardt establishes is not derived from the results of the Committee's inquiry but from his own, Kipphardt's play may be read as a sequel to Brecht's Galileo, for Kipphardt sees Oppenheimer as a modern Galileo who sacrifices his moral integrity to pursue scientific interests. But unlike Galileo, Oppenheimer takes a definite stand for mankind:

Oppenheimer: ...We have been doing the work of the Devil,
and now we must return to our real tasks. Rabi
[a physicist who served as a witness in the trial]
told me a few days ago that he wants to devote himself
entirely to research again. We cannot do better than
keep the world open in the few places which can still
be kept open.³²

Through his investigation of the Committee's proceedings, Kipphardt has discovered that the scientist has a moral choice to make between serving the needs of government, mankind, or himself. The exposure of this modern dilemma is the real fruit of the Committee's hearings, and Kipphardt shapes his drama around this thesis.

Among the liberties Kipphardt has taken with the testimony from the trial are those of selection, arrangement, formulation, abridgment, and concentration. He gives Oppenheimer two defense attorneys instead of three and uses six witnesses instead of sixty. Characters appear on the stage who did not appear at the hearing. There are between-scene monologues, created by the author, purporting to describe the attitude of a given speaker to the case. Some of the statements in the play are taken from essays and speeches which are not in the official protocol, and scenes are introduced strictly for dramatic effect. At the end of the trial, the findings of the Committee are announced and Oppenheimer

is allowed a final word. Neither of these events took place during the actual event. As stated by Kipphardt:

Some filling-in and intensification was necessary in order to achieve a more tightly knit as well as more comprehensive documentation and, as such, more appropriate for the stage. In this respect, the author was guided by the principle: as little as possible, and as much as is indispensable. When the truth seemed jeopardized by an effect, he sacrificed the effect.³³

Thus, although the changes made are minor and certainly fact is adhered to more closely than in The Deputy, Kipphardt is nevertheless an artist. He is concerned that the interests of history are served, but as a playwright his dramatization focuses consistently on the lesson to be learned from the hearing rather than its literal meaning. He follows Hegel's advice in the Aesthetik:

...strip away the circumstances and aspects that are of merely secondary importance, and to replace them with such that allow the essence of the matter to appear in all its clarity.³⁴

Nor only was simplification and commentary essential in order to compress the three-thousand page court report into a producible play, but Kipphardt was aware of the tendency to superficiality latent in such concentration of facts, and he made a deliberate attempt "to subordinate word-for-word recapitulation to accuracy of meaning."³⁵ A similar focus on overall meaning is characteristic of Hochhuth's work, where the structure is formed from the conflict between moral absolutes that have been abstracted from the historical facts. As it has already been established that The Deputy is on the periphery of the Documentary genre, a further comparison of The Deputy and Oppenheimer may help to focus more clearly on the limitations imposed by the term 'Documentary'.

Both The Deputy and Oppenheimer consist of documented statements and of subjective inference based on documented evidence. But neither is strict Documentary, as both use invention to varying degrees although Kipphardt's play comes much closer to the Documentary ideal. Kipphardt uses direct quotations from testimony and documented materials far more than Hochhuth; he shifts between fact and fiction with less freedom than Hochhuth; he does not retexture his data by means of verse; his use of projections and taped announcements are contemporary means of instruction, while Hochhuth resorts to the more conventional means of entertainment, the theatre of illusion. The subject chosen by Hochhuth precludes a purely Documentary approach: no documented testimony was available concerning the Pope's reasons for his actions; and Hochhuth's use of fictitious characters imposed the necessity of using fictitious dialogue. A play like Oppenheimer is, quite apart from its continuing validity, a reopening of a closed case, whereas the matter of The Deputy is still an unsettled issue, as the Pope has been tried by Hochhuth without an official hearing. Because Kipphardt has chosen to present his thesis in a courtroom setting and has used courtroom testimony of a finite nature, he is more successful in presenting a drama that is theoretically based on fact, a Documentary drama in the truer sense of the term.

The overpowering length of The Deputy illustrates the serious editorial difficulties an author experiences when working on non-courtroom material. By choosing to dramatize the proceedings of a hearing, Kipphardt was able to master the shift from historical data to dramatic production

with more success than that experienced by Hochhuth. Even when additional information, other than the courtroom testimony, was used, the research was limited in scope, allowing a succinct and compact play of producable length to be created. Editing of courtroom documents was nevertheless still necessary, and artistic judgment is reflected in the selection, arrangement, and invention of material to create a viable theatre piece.

In the creation of Oppenheimer, it is evident that Kipphardt was influenced by Piscator's Epic theatre. Similar to Piscator's courtroom drama The Case of Clyde Griffiths (p. 33), Kipphardt uses the central figure as an occasional narrator, who steps out of the stage action and speaks directly to the audience. Following scenes of courtroom action, characters come forward and address the audience with monologues which reveal their personal attitudes about the hearings. Other Epic devices used are text and film projections to illustrate the subject being discussed by the characters on stage, and tape-recorded commentary played over a loud-speaker to give background information, both of which are a means of destroying illusion and clarifying facts. The dramatization of the hearings is divided into nine episodic scenes which build upon each other and illuminate the thesis: the scientist's foremost commitment is to mankind at large. Erwin Piscator's direction of the premiere production of Oppenheimer (Freie Volksbuehne, 1964) may have effected the final formation of the published script, especially in the designated use of film and projections which normally comes under the heading of 'directorial' decisions and adds to the Epic quality. Kipphardt

acknowledges Piscator's influence on his work (p. 51 , n. 5) and his play helps to clarify the relationship between Epic and Documentary Drama, as similar audio-visual devices and episodic structures occur in many Documentary dramas.

Kipphardt's use of language in Oppenheimer is not as complex as the use of verse structures by Hochhuth and Weiss. Instead of verse, Kipphardt uses the direct form of prose, often drawing complete passages from the courtroom testimony itself. In this manner he composes effective scenes filled with sharp dialogue that create the parry and thrust of forensic cross-questioning. Unlike Hochhuth, he avoids the designation of dialects for specific characters and uses theatrical monologues and recorded commentary to destroy illusion. Although he signifies interpretation through the use of italicized words, this is to indicate meaning rather than emotion. Discussion is used to illuminate abstract specific moral dilemma, rather than to delineate character or create an emotional atmosphere. Actually Kipphardt's prime control over diction is exercised in his choice and arrangement of pre-existing documentation, but this control alone has considerable effect. Through the process of selecting and co-ordinating certain testimony, he has been accused of creating a source of evil out of Roger Robb, counsel to the A.E.C.; an antagonist out of Edward Teller, physicist and witness at the hearing; and a heroic martyr out of Oppenheimer.³⁶ It is this selection and arrangement of material with the resulting presentation of historical personalities that has proven to be one of the more controversial aspects of the drama.

Although the Documentary dramatist may be searching for moral lessons which are relevant to the Society of Man, he seems to defeat his purpose when major character figures (the Pope, Churchill, Oppenheimer) are distorted in order to serve the playwright's arguments. In the case of Oppenheimer, the controversy was not as explosive as that created by Hochhuth's The Deputy, but repercussions from the play have been felt on an international level. Performed in Germany, France, Great Britain, and the U.S., the issue once again is whether the central figure has been presented in a true light. Eric Bentley's response to the 1969 New York production is a case in point:

...it is not the smallest weakness in this play of many weaknesses that the title role is so passive, is so seldom brought into dynamic relation with other characters...Kipphardt is so busy rescuing Oppenheimer from fools and knaves that he fails to draw a credible portrait of the man himself. .../Actually/ Oppenheimer was far more problematic - far less sweetly reasonable /than Kipphardt portrays him/.³⁷ this man of thought was, in fact, overawed by power.

Unlike the criticism of Hochhuth's treatment of the Pope, Kipphardt is criticised for being far too sympathetic towards Oppenheimer. In Berlin the following observation was made:

Would he (Oppenheimer) not in fact be a more dramatic character if he were less the noble, pathetic, blameless persecuted professor of Leftwing tradition and more the man who told his questioners that he was willing to do anything the government might order him to do.³⁸

Ironically, it is not the critics of Oppenheimer who have objected to Kipphardt's liberal treatment of the man, but the "defenders of Oppenheimer, including the man himself, (who) have protested."³⁹ The

physicist has, however, approved another stage version of the hearings, Jean Vilar's Oppenheimer Dossier. Vilar considers his treatment of Oppenheimer to be less idealistic than Kipphardt's, and thus more truthful:

An honest reader who has some idea of the demands (or scruples) of the stage will admit, however attentive to detail he is, that I have not tried for an instant to give an advantageous or even less an heroic, view of the main character. Nor have I depersonalised him. I have tried, I have done my utmost, to show him here - and the same is true of the witnesses, the jury and the counsel - as he was in 1954...We hear him answering the questions that are put to him.⁴⁰

The problem of character distortion is a very real one, to the point that some of the characters in the 1969 New York production had their real names (Oppenheimer, Teller, et.al.) while others had fictitious names. The real names were removed on the advice of lawyers, as libel suits were feared. This proved to be a disconcerting experience for the viewer, as reflected in Bentley's question:

If Edward Teller can be presented under his own name as a heel, why should a very engaging portrait of my Columbia colleague Isadore Rabi be called 'Jacob Lehmann of M.I.T.'⁴¹

Although Bentley credits the entire incident to "lawyers games,"⁴² it illustrates the sensitive nature of Documentary dramas. Libel suits are possible only when defamation of character has occurred, and, as many of the characters portrayed in Documentaries are still living, the issue is not a simple one.

Perhaps Hochhuth and Kipphardt have chosen the more controversial approach to Documentary Drama: to present moral lessons which are salient

to a modern audience through the examination of actual people and events. Both authors use well known historical figures and delegate to them certain actions and personalities, thus exposing themselves to accusations of character assassination. They compound the issue by mixing fiction with fact, yet never acknowledging the shift between the two in the course of their plays. It is little wonder that critics find it necessary to defend the characters portrayed rather than discussing the moral lessons implied, especially when the morality of the author's actions are in question.

However, the proposed task of Documentary dramatists is not impossible. Peter Weiss has managed to come up with a solution. He continues to present moral lessons which are salient to a modern audience through the examination of actual people and events. But, whenever possible, Weiss depersonalizes his characters by giving them numbers rather than names and as little personality as possible. This may have been a natural development, as Weiss had the experiences of Hochhuth and Kipphardt to observe and profit from. However, as we shall discover, even Weiss participates in subjective interjection. Perhaps the final solution would be to rename the genre 'Interpreted Documentary,' thus avoiding the presumptuous position that the dramas 'refrain from invention,' as their current name infers. While the authors seldom claim such a position, one assumes from the debates that ensue concerning the 'truth' of certain dramas that there is confusion over the implications of the term 'Documentary.'

Peter Weiss

To the majority of the English public the name of Peter Weiss was first heralded as the author of The Persecution and Murder of Jean Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum at Charenton Under The Direction of the Marquis De Sade, the English premiere of which was at the Aldwych Theatre, London on August 20, 1964. A prolific author of film, radio and stage plays, many of which have been translated into English and other languages, Weiss now boasts an international reputation as a writer and artist. As a writer of experimental prose before becoming a playwright, he was awarded the Charles Veillon Prize in 1963 for his autobiographical novel, Vanishing Point. His work has also been rewarded with the Lessing Prize in 1965, and the Heinrich Mann Prize in 1966.

Peter Weiss was born on November 8, 1916 in Nowawes near Berlin; his father was a prosperous textile manufacturer and a Czech Jew (converted to Christianity), his mother a Swiss actress before she married. Weiss' youth was spent in Berlin and Bremen, where he was raised as a Lutheran. In 1934, the family emigrated, initially to England, where Weiss studied photography at the London Polytechnic. Two years later, on returning to the continent, he studied at the Academy of Art in Prague for a time. From there he anticipated the Nazi occupation by going first to Switzerland and finally to Sweden in 1939, where his parents were then living. His is the story of a typical representative of the twentieth century: the stranded Central European, driven about by crises, wars and persecutions, a product of the inter-war years, whose

rootlessness is seen as a part of the historical process.

The experiences of the youthful narrator of Leavetaking and Vanishing Point reflect the life Weiss led during the twenties, the thirties and the war-torn years. The sense of being an outsider was strong, for emigration did not mean "adopting an 'attitude.'" I was a foreigner wherever I went...not linked by solidarity with any nation, any race."⁴³ He has continued to be a foreigner, choosing Stockholm as his place of residence, yet writing in the German language of the German experience. Esslin feels that a great deal of the character, the form, and the subject matter of Weiss' work is explained by the fact that he is a German speaking exile looking at the chaos and horrors of Europe from the vantage point of a neutral northern country:

Weiss writes in German, but this language is not (Esslin's italics) the German of present-day Germany, which has acquired all the sediment of its history, expressions and turns of phrase that originated in Nazi times, in the misery of the starvation of the immediate postwar period and the opulence of the economic miracle; it is the German he learned and spoke as a child, the German of a man who had to speak English, to speak and write Swedish for a living. No one else had exactly the same experience, no one else speaks exactly the same language. To have realized this, to have found his own language, and to have shown the courage to speak (Esslin's italics) it, regardless of what others might think, is the secret of Peter Weiss' impact.⁴⁴

Although he began as a surrealist painter and then turned to producing documentary films before becoming a playwright, Weiss explained his preference for the theatre in an interview with Paul Gray:

The theatre can renew itself, can say everything about our time that film can and be even more alive than film. ...There are films now and then which let me leave

the movie-house feeling that I have seen something connected with my immediate life, but usually I leave a film feeling that I've seen a reproduction of something, and it's not sufficient. But when I leave a good play, well acted, I feel alive and inspired. I want to go on with my own writing. I know I'm living in a living world, which can be changed, in which a man can work.⁴⁵

Weiss' viewpoint that the world can be changed reflects his philosophic approach to the theatre: "I think it is absolutely necessary to write with the point of trying to influence or to change society."⁴⁶ And so in the field of drama Weiss, like Hochhuth in The Deputy and Kipphardt in In The Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer, feels the need to swing away from the cynicism of the Absurd to what is seen as a more positive direction of involvement. In this respect Weiss acknowledges a tremendous indebtedness to Brecht:

Brecht is the one who has helped me most, because he never wrote anything just for the sake of the dramatic event but rather to show how the world is and find out how to change it. He never exhibits figures on stage in an unbearable situation without giving the audience a chance to find out what can be done. Most theatre now shows despair, but not why it exists or what solutions there may be - which, I think, is much more interesting.⁴⁷

He also feels Brecht influenced his style of writing:

Brecht influenced me as a dramatist. I learnt most from Brecht. I learnt clarity from him, the necessity of making clear the social question in a play. I learnt from his lightness. He is never heavy in the psychological German way.⁴⁸

Dramatic style and function are not the only aspects of the Epic theatre Weiss adopted. He also expresses the belief that the theatre should be adaptable and utilitarian, similar to Piscator's approach to production at the beginning of his career: "The theatre should work almost in the

way that Agit-Prop did, playing with non-professional actors, performing in factories, on the street, in schools."⁴⁹

Weiss thus reflects the views of Brecht and Piscator in his preference for a dynamically political theatre that can reach the people and help change society. However, he has chosen to use the dramatic form of Documentary Drama to express his views rather than the Epic mode of fable and fiction. In explaining the general movement toward documentarism, he states:

After the war there were many themes which we thought couldn't be transformed into art - they were so enormous they couldn't be approached that way, especially the overwhelming theme of human destruction.⁵⁰

In his first Documentary drama, The Investigation, Weiss explores the bestiality, the dementia, and above all the scope of human destruction in the German concentration camp of Auschwitz during World War II.

The Investigation

The Investigation is the most extreme example of the Documentary genre to be analyzed in this study, as its text follows so closely the documents of the trial in Frankfurt and other published reports on the history of Auschwitz. Weiss keeps the trial setting for his drama, which allows him to show the historical phenomenon of Auschwitz with the distancing effect of an investigation while at the same time allowing him to draw his script directly from authentic court testimony. Based on the War Crime Trials held in Frankfurt/Main from 1963 to 1965, Weiss claims that all the facts contained in the play are authentic: "Only a condensation of the evidence can remain on the stage. This condensation

should contain nothing but facts."⁵¹ It is, in other words, a Documentary drama that relates untold unspeakable horrors; shows that the men who perpetrated them still believe, most of them quite sincerely, that they were only doing their duty; and points out that those few who miraculously survived live in a world in which their former torturers and would-be executioners are, for the most part, better off than they. The Investigation implies that given proper stimuli, we are all only too capable of such bestialities if encouraged or ordered to commit them, and is, presumably, intended as a memento and a warning.

Upon examination of the drama it becomes clear that, like Kipphardt, Weiss has abandoned literal authenticity in a number of important respects. None of the hundreds of witnesses who gave evidence at the trial is named in the play; they are variously represented by nine actors; "Personal experience and confrontations must be steeped in anonymity. Inasmuch as the witnesses in the play lose their names, they become mere speaking tubes. The nine witnesses sum up what hundreds expressed."⁵² Three similarly nameless figures represent the judges, the prosecution, and the defense. Only the defendants are identified by name, but once identified, the name is not repeated every time they speak; their speeches are distinguished simply by the labels 'Accused #1', 'Accused #7', etc. Weiss makes it clear that the defendants do not interest him as individuals any more than the other figures in the play: "...the bearers of these names (the accused) should not be accused once again in this drama. ...they have lent their names which, within the drama, exist as symbols of a system that implicated in its guilt many others who never appeared in court."⁵³

The fact that the play is not just a condensation of the trial is underlined by the subtitle: 'Oratorio in 11 Cantos'.⁵⁴ The use of the word 'Canto' reminds one of Dante's 'Inferno', and, indeed Weiss has arranged his material so that there is a progression 'downwards', from canto to canto. The play starts with the arrival of the deportees ('The Song of the Platform'), and then the conditions in the camp are described ('The Song of the Camp'). In 'The Song of the Swing' we hear how prisoners were tortured and murdered one by one. Canto 4 deals with various aspects of life in the camp; it includes an account of the experiments carried out on women, as well as more general speculation about the possibilities of survival as human guinea pigs. In the fifth and sixth cantos we are told about the fate of two individuals - one a victim (Lili Tofler), the other a tool of the system (Stark). Then some of the more efficient methods of destruction are described: 'The Song of the Black Wall', 'The Song of Phenol', and 'The Song of the Bunker Block'. Suffering and death become more and more anonymous as the numbers involved become larger. With the description of the properties of the gas and the first experiments with it ('The Song of Cyklon B') we approach the climax of this progression; the final canto deals with the gas chambers and the inferno itself: 'The Song of the Fire Ovens'.

Like Hochhuth, Weiss writes in verse and thus reveals his own shaping hand in every line of the play. The medium of The Investigation is an irregular, free verse, the most striking feature of which is its flat, unemotional, impersonal tone. Only occasionally does Weiss let a hint of emotion creep into his dialogues and it is the verse-form

which plays the most important part in keeping the language unemotional and unemphatic. This is clear from the very appearance of the verse: there are no punctuation marks, there is simply a natural pause at the end of each line, because almost every line is a separate sense group. This tends to make the dialogue slow and reflective. Thus Weiss' verse has the opposite effect from Hochhuth's, for Hochhuth makes his dialogue swift and urgent by arranging his lines so that the sense frequently carries over from one into the next. The frequent use of italics emphasizes the emotional nature of many of the exchanges: whereas Weiss' verse has no rhythm except that dictated by natural, unemphatic language, and he does not use italics at all. Like Kipphardt, he makes no attempt to interpret character, indeed anonymity is sought. His figures do not really come alive or have separate independent dialects or characterizations.

The unemotional tone of Weiss' witnesses is all the more frightening when considering the horrible details they relate in their testimony:

5th Witness: The child stood there with his apple
 Roger went over to the child
 grabbed him by the ankles
 and smashed his head
 against the barrack wall
 Then he picked up the apple
 ...I saw him eat the apple.⁵⁵

7th Witness: When I asked him what had happened
 he said
 They smashed my balls in there
 He died the same day.⁵⁶

Weiss sometimes uses lists for their cumulative effect, and occasionally repeats phrases or formulations for emphasis; generally, however, the

verse is simple and straightforward. The simplicity and directness of Weiss' style is reflected in the fact that there is almost no reported speech in the play: significant remarks and orders - as well as occasional passages from letters and documents - are quoted directly.

The subtitle ('Oratoria in 11 Cantos') suggests that The Investigation is intended as a memorial to the millions who died in the concentration camps - the nameless victims of a human evil. This is certainly part of the play's intended function - but not, in my opinion, the most important part. Although Weiss is justified in claiming that the facts contained in the play are all authentic, there are certain passages in which he goes beyond his documentary source.⁵⁷ They contain some of his own ideas about Auschwitz and the system of which it was a part, and it is these interpretative additions, rather than the subtitle, which reveal the author's main intention in writing the play.

These passages are generally put into the mouth of the 3rd Witness, and most of them occur in Cantos 4 and 11. One of the most important of them is the following:

3rd Witness: Many of those who were destined
to play the part of prisoners
had grown up with the same ideas
the same way of looking at things
as those
who found themselves acting as guards
They were all equally dedicated
to the same nation
to its prosperity
and its rewards
And if they had not been designated
prisoners
they could equally well have been guards⁵⁸

Here, apart from emphasizing that Auschwitz was a natural result of the regime and that there was nothing demonic or incomprehensible about it, Weiss is also talking on a deeper level about human nature itself. By pointing out that most of the victims could just as easily have been oppressors if the circumstances had been different, he is showing us what possibilities there are within us all. In Canto 2 the author develops the same idea out of a description of daily life in the camp:

5th Witness: It was normal
 that everything had been stolen from us
 It was normal
 that we stole too
 Dirt sores and diseases
 were what was normal
 It was normal
 that all around us people were dying
 and it was normal
 to live in the face of one's own death
 Our feelings grow numb
 and we looked at corpses
 with complete indifference
 and that was normal
 And it was normal
 that there were some among us
 who helped those who stood over us
 to beat us⁵⁹

This passage contains the most striking rhetorical device of the whole play; the repetition of the word 'normal' gives the speech an incisive quality which makes it stand out above the rest of the dialogue. Because he has emphasized it in this way, the author obviously intended this to be one of the key passages of the play. By stressing the fact that such reactions and behaviour were perfectly normal in the circumstances, Weiss gives the speech a wider relevance - here he is telling us not only about life in Auschwitz, but also about the relativity of morals and civilization in general.

Some of the witnesses in the trial described the factories which were built at Auschwitz and the conditions of the prisoners who had to work in them. Weiss has incorporated this evidence into Canto 5, and takes the opportunity given by these passages to emphasize the fact that there were close connections between Auschwitz and some of the leading industrial concerns of the country. He points out that these firms grew immensely rich by using slave labour, and that many of them still exist today - they have only changed their names:

Prosecuting Attorney:

By the limitless grinding down of people
you
as well as the other directors
of the large firms involved
made profits
that annually amounted to billions
...Let us once more bring to mind
that the successors to those same concerns
have ended up today in magnificent condition
and that they are now in the midst of
as they say
a new phase of expansion.⁶⁰

In the last canto, Weiss expresses more of his own sentiments, this time through the 7th Witness. He expands certain remarks made by various witnesses into an accusation of the millions without whose co-operation Auschwitz could never have existed:

7th Witness: Each one of the 6000 camp staff personnel
knew what was taking place
and each at his post did
what was required
for the functioning of the whole
Furthermore every locomotive engineer
every switchman
every railroad employee
who had anything to do
with the transportation of the people
know what went on in the camp

Every telegraph clerk and typist
 who passed on the Deportation Orders
 knew
 every single one
 of the hundreds and
 thousands of office workers
 connected with the widespread operation
 knew
 what it was all about.⁶¹

The 7th Witness goes on to give some idea of the total number of people who perished in Auschwitz, after which Weiss points out - through the Prosecuting Attorney's reply to a protest by the defense - that the attitudes which made the defendants into criminals still persist in many quarters today.

The play, finished before a verdict was handed down at the Frankfurt Trial, ends without passing sentence - with a final statement by the accused Mulka (#1), which requires no commentary since, according to Weiss,⁶² it represented current German popular opinion:

Accused #1: All of us
 I want to make that very clear
 did nothing but our duty
 even when that duty was hard
 and even when it grieved us to do it
 Today
 when our nation has worked its way up
 after a devastating war
 to a leading position in the world
 we ought to concern ourselves
 with other things
 than blame and reproaches
 that should be thought of
 as long since atoned for⁶³

The playwright's last stage direction: "Loud approbation from the Accused."⁶⁴

Weiss felt that the Frankfurt trial contained important lessons for society, and the way he has presented his material reveals how he has

tried to bring these lessons home to us. He has used a type of verse which raises the dialogue above the level of court evidence, but at the same time keeps the pathos to a minimum in order to allow thought from becoming numbed; he has depersonalized the people who took part in the trial, because he was not primarily interested in them as individuals; and he has made certain additions to the authentic material which point the wider sociological, moral, and economic implications of Auschwitz as he sees them.

By depersonalizing his characters, Weiss avoids the accusations of character assassination experienced by Hochhuth and Kipphardt, as no one person is singled out as the symbolic instigator of the crime. However, the accusations against the capitalistic society as a whole, reflecting Weiss' Marxist viewpoint, did lead one critic to remark:

Peter Weiss, who has converted to Communism, has not written his Auschwitz play to merely master the past, but to synchronize his own attack with the permanent⁶⁵ propaganda campaign of the Eastern bloc.

Even Weiss admits that his play "concerns the role of German big industry in the extermination of the Jews. I want to denounce capitalism which even sinks so low as to turn gas chambers into a business."⁶⁶ As controversial as this attack may be, Weiss was able to at least focus attention on the issues he proposed rather than instigating arguments over the various merits and personality traits of historical figures.

Another argument levelled against The Investigation was that it exploited the horrors of the hearings but added nothing aesthetically. There was talk of "literary etiquette"⁶⁷ in the mere editing of Bernd Naumann's 600 page report on the War Crimes Trial, the primary source of

Weiss' play. "The Investigation virtually wrote itself,"⁶⁸ was the deprecating comment in the Times Literary Supplement. Erwin Piscator, who directed one of the seventeen premieres (Freie Volksbuehne, Berlin) on October 19, 1965, defended Weiss with the following argument:

...there are in Weiss's treatment of the court-record elements of selection, accentuation, strategic grouping which make of it a legitimate work of art. These are underlined, in the Berlin production, by the use of lighting, of intense stylization of delivery, and by the accompaniment of music by Luigi Nono.⁶⁹

The fact that accusations of 'nothing added' were even made is a compliment, for it merely points out how skilled and unobtrusive Weiss' entire verse structure is.

Perhaps the criticism actually stems from the lack of theatricality in the courtroom production, as Weiss stresses simplicity in the presentation of his play: "...no attempt should be made to reconstruct the courtroom before which the proceedings of the camp trial took place."⁷⁰ As previously stated above (n. 69), Piscator used music and special lighting, but his original plans for the use of photographs and films from the archives were not used in the Berlin production. In the Stuttgart production a map of Auschwitz was projected on a screen and gradually filled with captions as the stories of the camp atrocities were told. But generally utter simplicity is stressed, as in Peter Brook's production at the Aldwych. In a program note Brook stated that decor, music, and lighting could add nothing to the play, and he proceeded with the following staging:

A school of red leather chairs stood ranged as for a board meeting. On a central table were glasses, water,

a microphone. Twenty-four actors in off-duty suits and ties came on...there was no acting to speak of - one or two readers who insisted on histrionic touches of characterization found the audience withdrawing from them, as if in distaste. Few voices were raised. There was no music or special lighting...

Yet The Investigation is easily the most powerful event, so far, of the autumn: not just as a cold collation of well known facts but⁷¹ as a performance, a created emotional experience.

Whatever its merits or otherwise, the play created a tremendous impact in theatres throughout Europe: "When the play was over people streamed out, silent, very thoughtful and serious; scarcely anyone spoke..."⁷² There were a number of playgoers who left the theatre during the Berlin performance, and Piscator managed to submit a questionnaire to them about their emotional reaction to the play:

The number (who left the play before it was over) vascillated between twenty and eighty each evening (the Theater der Freien Volksbuhne seats 1047). In a questionnaire we asked the playgoers to give us the reasons which prompted them to leave the performance early. Half of those questioned stated that they could not endure what was being said and therefore left. We noticed that it was predominantly elderly ladies who did not want to put up with three hours of The Investigation. More than twenty-five percent raised objections to a dramatization of the Auschwitz-trial. Of course motives other than purely reactionary ones could have played a part in the poll, since the questions we asked required a single yes or no answer. The number of those who felt bored was comparatively small: fifteen percent of those who left the performance before the end. In the course of time the number who refused to answer our questionnaires rose. At first it was thirty-two percent, but later it increased to forty-five. The point is whether the unwillingness to answer questions posed by the theatre arose only from an antipathy against giving information concerning an irrational conduct in even one instance, or more from an awareness of guilt. To what extent the entire audience shared in these reactions cannot be determined, since we questioned only those who left the performance; even the above-mentioned figures can scarcely be used as an index.⁷³

The fact that only fifteen percent of the audience left out of boredom even without the theatrical accouterments of spectacle reflects the strength of Weiss' theme and diction. For if the senses of the victims in the concentration camp were dulled by so much pain, then the audience too runs the risk of suffering numbed nerves after the four hour verbal onslaught of horrifying details. Actually this is part of Weiss' approach: "...part of the play's essential quality is its enormous length - it is unbearable. It should be unbearable,"⁷⁴ like Auschwitz. Unlike Hochhuth's The Deputy, then, length adds to the theatrical experience of the audience, although the play is often cut down to a mere acceptable three hour production.

There is little doubt that The Investigation is a Documentary drama, although the play does not consist simply of historical documents in dramatic form. Like Kipphardt's treatment of the AEC Oppenheimer report, Weiss took the Bernd Naumann report and went through a process of selection, arrangement, formulation, abridgment, concentration, and some addition of personal opinion to create his episodic drama based on fact. In some respects, such as characterization and combined use of fact with fiction, Weiss' invention is much less than that exercised by Kipphardt, but his verse is far more inventive than the prose diction employed by Kipphardt. Hochhuth also uses verse, but his play is far more subjective than Weiss', as it is raised on a foundation of limited historical facts. With In The Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer and The Investigation, on the other hand, the greater part of the content is authentic, although, as we have seen, a degree of invention has been added to each of the

plays. However, all three plays are effective on a wider front than the immediate situations they present, for the underlying ethical problems which the plays help to make us aware of are those of all organized society. An examination of this wider, societal function of the Documentary Drama will help to coorelate the Epic Theatre of Piscator and Brecht with the Documentary Theatre of Hochhuth, Kipphardt, and Weiss.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER III

- ¹Martin Esslin. op. cit., pp. 127-128.
- ²Rolf Hochhuth as quoted in Reflections. op. cit., pp. 134-135.
- ³Rolf Hochhuth as quoted in "Interview with Rolf Hochhuth."
Judy Stone. The Storm Over THE DEPUTY. op. cit., p. 43.
- ⁴Ibid., pp. 46-47.
- ⁵Judy Stone. op. cit., p. 43.
- ⁶Rolf Hochhuth as quoted in Reflections. op. cit., p. 136.
- ⁷Rolf Hochhuth as quoted in "Interview with Rolf Hochhuth."
Judy Stone. op. cit., p. 43.
- ⁸Rolf Hochhuth as quoted in Reflections. op. cit., p. 134.
- ⁹Ibid., p. 133.
- ¹⁰Rolf Hochhuth. The Deputy. (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964),
Richard and Clara Winston, Translators, p. 287.
- ¹¹Robert Brustein criticized the 1964 New York production by Herman
Shumlin, saying that the adaptation had not cut the play but butchered
it, carving out its intellectual heart and leaving only the "melodramatic
bones." Robert Brustein. Seasons of Discontent. (New York: Simon and
Schuster, 1965), p. 206.
- ¹²There is neither time nor need here to present all of the elaborate
arguments that have raged around the moral, philosophical, historical,
artistic, and emotional issues raised by The Deputy. These may be read
in proliferation in The Storm Over THE DEPUTY, op. cit.
- ¹³Rolf Hochhuth. op. cit., p. 102.
- ¹⁴Rolf Hochhuth as quoted in "Interview with Rolf Hochhuth."
Judy Stone. op. cit., p. 43.
- ¹⁵Ibid., p. 51.
- ¹⁶"The Vatican Papers." Newsweek. (New York: Newsweek, Inc., April 16,
1973), p. 69.
- ¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Rolf Hochhuth as quoted in "Interview with Rolf Hochhuth." Patricia Marx. The Storm Over THE DEPUTY. op. cit., p. 53.

¹⁹Rolf Hochhuth. op. cit., p. 15.

²⁰Ibid., p. 215.

²¹Ibid.

²²See Alfred Kazin. "The Vicar of Christ." The Storm Over THE DEPUTY. op. cit., p. 106; Susan Sontag. "Reflections on The Deputy." The Storm Over THE DEPUTY. op. cit., pp. 120-121.

²³Rolf Hochhuth. op. cit., p. 31.

²⁴Ibid., p. 222.

²⁵Heinar Kipphardt. In The Matter Of J. Robert Oppenheimer. (New York: Hill and Wang, Inc., 1964), Ruth Speirs, Translator, p. 71.

²⁶Ibid., p. 39.

²⁷Ibid., p. 32.

²⁸Ibid., p. 22.

²⁹Ibid., p. 5.

³⁰Ibid., p. 77.

³¹Ibid., p. 126.

³²Ibid., p. 127.

³³Ibid., p. 5.

³⁴Hegel as quoted in In The Matter Of J. Robert Oppenheimer. op. cit., p. 5.

³⁵Heinar Kipphardt. op. cit., p. 6.

³⁶Eric Bentley. "Oppenheimer Mon Amour." New York Times. (March 16, 1969), p. 5.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Harry Buckwitz. "The German Theatre Today." What Is Theater?. op. cit., p. 417.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Jean Vilar. "Documentary Drama Here and There." World Theatre. (1968, Vol. 17, No. 5-6), p. 411.

⁴¹Eric Bentley. "Oppenheimer Mon Amour." op. cit., p. 5.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Peter Weiss as quoted in "Auschwitz on Stage Center." Atlas. (1966, Vol. 12, January), p. 27.

⁴⁴Martin Esslin. op. cit., p. 153.

⁴⁵Peter Weiss as quoted in "A Living World." Paul Gray. Tulane Drama Review. (1966, Vol. 11, Fall), p. 114.

⁴⁶Peter Weiss as quoted in "Peter Weiss in Conversation with A. Alvarez." A. Alvarez. Encore. (1965, Vol. 12, No. 56, July/August), p. 72.

⁴⁸Peter Weiss as quoted in "Peter Weiss." The Times. (London, August 19, 1964), p. 53.

⁴⁹Peter Weiss as quoted in "A Living World." op. cit., p. 112.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 106.

⁵¹Peter Weiss. The Investigation. (New York: Atheneum, 1966), Jon Swan and Ulu Grosbard, Translators, p. 1.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Erika Salloch. "The Divina Commedia as Model and Anti-Model for The Investigation by Peter Weiss." Modern Drama. (1971, Vol. 14, May), p. 1.

⁵⁵Peter Weiss. The Investigation. op. cit., p. 75.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 79.

⁵⁷"Auschwitz on Stage Center." op. cit., p. 29.

⁵⁸Peter Weiss. The Investigation. op. cit., p. 108.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 41-42.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 131.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 264-265.

⁶²Gertrud Mander. "Who's Afraid of Peter Weiss?" Drama. (1971, No. 101, Summer), p. 59.

⁶³Peter Weiss. The Investigation. op. cit., p. 270.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Hans-Dietrich Sander as quoted in "Auschwitz on Stage Center." op. cit., p. 26.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Gertrud Mander. op. cit., p. 61.

⁶⁸"Didactic Dramatist." Times Literary Supplement. (London: April 24, 1968), p. 89.

⁶⁹"Documentary Drama." Times Literary Supplement. (London: February 16, 1968), p. 102.

⁷⁰Peter Weiss. The Investigation. op. cit., p. 1.

⁷¹Ronald Bryden. "The Theatre of Death." New Statesman. (1965, Vol. 70, October), p. 666.

⁷²"Auschwitz on Stage Center." op. cit., p. 29.

⁷³Erwin Piscator. "Post Investigation." op. cit., p. 347.

⁷⁴Peter Weiss as quoted in "A Living World." op. cit., p. 111.

CHAPTER IV: DOCUMENTARY DRAMA IN TOTO

Conclusion

Peter Weiss, Heinar Kipphart, and Rolf Hochhuth are continuing the revolution in the German theatre ignited by Bertolt Brecht and Erwin Piscator some forty years earlier. Piscator and Brecht developed and practiced a dramatic theory that transformed the theatre into a political and social arena. Within the walls of this arena, issues were debated and events were broadly portrayed. The theatre assumed a moral responsibility. Between 1919 and 1933 German drama moved away from Expressionism and toward the Epic form. Piscator was especially instrumental in preparing the way for the political Epic drama by staging various dramas in accordance with his political outlook. As early as 1927 he conceived the plan for a documentary drama and by adapting Alexei Tolstoy's novel Rasputin he staged a political chronicle (p. 20). However, Piscator dramatic experiments and Brecht's Epic plays were forced into exile in 1933, and further development of the documentary drama was delayed until the economic recovery of West Germany following World War II.

Following the holocaust of World War II and its evidence of attempted genocide; in light of the inordinate consequences of atomic power, the entire structure of morality was questioned by the major playwrights. The Documentary dramatist admitted to bearing the burden of his own dust and accepted the guilt and the responsibility of individual conduct in the quest for meaningful existence. However, the Documentary genre that emerged in the 1960's in Germany was created under different circumstances than the political Epic theatre of the 1920's and thus it

takes on a different form than the embryonic documentary dramas of Piscator.

The post-World War II German dramatists are conditioned by different political trends and social experiences than Piscator and Brecht. The Epic dramas deal with the issue of war as it pertains to the individual, rendering the fates of persons sacrificed in the movement of mass armies and machinery. The issue of war is also of prime concern to the Documentary dramatists but the experiences of World War II differ slightly from those of World War I. The fire-bombings of defenseless cities, and the annihilation of millions by a single bomb give a new light to the subject.

Following Hiroshima, individual fates can only be examined in melodrama or when juxtaposed against the larger question of the survival of a society, for singular instances of death and degradation no longer seem impressive when mass destruction is available at the flick of a switch. Even when individual cases of victimization are dealt with, as in The Pueblo and In The Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the protagonists are considered mere symbols, representatives of one side of a two sided debate which involves the actions of an entire society. The issue becomes the target, with personal aspects of the individual's life ignored.

Thus Weiss, Kipphardt, and Hochhuth have chosen the same topic to dramatize as Piscator and Brecht, but the problems of war have mushroomed to proportions that are no longer effective in fictitious situations with fictitious characters. Ironically it is the inadequacies in distortions of the media reports, according to Weiss, that add yet another

motivation for the use of authenticated facts in creating drama for the 1960's. The fearsome development of mass media, Weiss states, leads to the stupefaction and bewilderment of society,¹ and which there is practically no way to stop (people have not yet begun to read the press critically) has led the playwrights to a dramatic form which enables them to express their own convictions (usually opposing those circulated by the mass media) concretely and with the support of lesser known but substantiated facts to give saliency and credibility to their arguments. Nevertheless, these 'reports' are just as susceptible to inaccuracies as the mass media, as we have discovered. An inherent distrust of the information circulated by mass media can be understood in light of the propaganda issued by the governing powers during the War which proved to be self-serving and often totally incorrect.

Thus the desire to give meaning to life, the uncompromising magnitude of reality, and the wish to expose the biased reports issued in mass communications are some of the reasons playwrights turned to a new kind of political theatre, a Documentary Drama that is based on authenticated facts drawn from the reality of life. Another reason attributed to the movement has been monetary profit. Peter Bauland offers this somewhat more cynical viewpoint:

A dominant theme of postwar Germany became: Not to choose is also a choice. ...the arrogantly insensitive mood of prosperity and the loud, public self-flagellation for savage misdeeds spring from the same source. It is far easier to sit in the square in sackcloth and ashes when you know that a hot bath, a clean shirt, and an expensive suit are waiting at home. It did not take all that long for West Germany to go from total devastation to Europe's chief exporter of goods. Along with the Volkswagens and the

precision instruments, Germany began to peddle to the world the product of what seems to have become one of its major industries: guilt.²

Whether the playwrights' motives are crass or idealistic, the issues involved are presented as intellectual and theoretical arguments. Mass destruction can not be fully appreciated on the stage; pictures of Auschwitz have a tendency to numb man's realization of the tremendous horror of the actual experience. Thus the Documentary productions focus on verbal debate of ideologies rather than the Epic visualization of man's subservience to machinery. However, in order to stimulate reaction, the issues must be faced optimistically, with the knowledge that man made problems can be solved by man if he is only willing to deal with them rather than to succumb to them. The Berliner Ensemble production of Discourse On Vietnam aimed at this very goal:

Our production tries to provoke this critical attitude which ends by recognizing that concrete political situations have only been created by man and that, consequently, their transformation too is subject to human decisions.³

Audience response is also of prime concern in Peter Brook's production of Us:

The moment of truth was also our one moment of drama, the one moment perhaps of tragedy, the one and only confrontation. This was when at the very end all pretences of playacting ceased and actor and audience together paused, at a moment when they and Vietnam were looking one another in the face....⁴

and in the Casans, Garcia, Guentes production of Vietnam, An Example:

One thing we could not allow is that the audience should remain outside the action; they must judge and be judged at the same time, as we ourselves were in writing the play.⁵

Thus an intellectual approach to actual problems is developed in order

to inform the audience and elicit positive response in dealing with those problems. Unfortunately, because of the complexity of the problems, the plays often read like theses, which in turn opens them to criticism concerning their theatrical effect.

Weiss says: "A Documentary Theatre which is to be a political forum first of all, and which renounces aesthetic considerations, calls its right to exist into question,"⁶ and again that "Documentary Theatre cannot compete with an authentic political event,"⁷ and especially that "The Documentary Theatre must be a form of artistic expression to have any validity."⁸ Only in Documentary drama we are dealing not with fictionalized 'fables' based on reality but with 'model diagrams' of actual current events; and the instrument which gives the work its form is not the dialectical imagination of the fictitious theatre but an analytical, checking and critical activity. This is what brings the theatre nearer to the traditionally 'serious' activities, removing it from the purely aesthetic sector: the one of dangerous games and jeopardised entertainments.

The main risk of the Documentary Theatre thus stems from the great distance between it and the theatre of the dialectical imagination, and from the narrow theoretical frontier separating it from political activity proper; for in practice it is a distillation of polemic realities and thus runs the risk that this product may not be art. As far as I am concerned, the Documentary Theatre cannot be considered as the opposite of the theatre of the dialectical imagination (the gay and creative theatre which is capable of merry entertainment) nor be substituted for political activity proper, for if it were it would become an excuse for

real inactivity in this sphere. We would then have, instead of a rich and varied theatrical activity on one side, and politically active theatre personalities, a mere semblance of that theatre and that activity: a hyper-politicized theatre would be neither theatre (for it would be aesthetically impoverished) nor politics (for its activity would be politically ineffective). To sum up, one cannot have Documentary Theatre instead of the imaginative theatre or instead of politics. We need the imaginative theatre, we need active participation in politics, and we need the Documentary Theatre as an art form.

Rolf Zimmerman presents another viewpoint of the Documentary Drama as a polemic art form. Zimmerman maintains⁹ that there exists, beside the main traditions of theatre, a tradition of polemic. Having its own aim, polemical theatre has its own method. The aim being to recreate the author's sense of outrage, the method is not to use 'rounded,' 'human,' equally-right-and-wrong characters, but enactors of the outrageous on the one hand and, on the other, victims of outrage and rebels against outrage. The ending will be the open one of bitter tragi-comedy. A Documentary production infused with this idea will be perceived by the audience as an art form as well as a political forum. If we wish to know if Documentary dramas are a success on this basis we have only to remind ourselves that the purpose of this kind of play is to communicate a sense of outrage.

The Documentary Drama is a didactic theatre; it presumes to influence and consequently takes sides, which in turn limits the number of people who will listen. It has human enemies; and human beings who admire the

enemies, or enjoy some kind of solidarity with them, cannot but detach themselves and walk out. An enemy does not make a good, open-minded audience. And as for allies, they don't need preaching to, although biased observations can serve the purposes of ritual, one of which is to confirm people in their convictions and prepare them for renewed struggle. But the ideal audience for the Documentary Theatre is neither one set of militants nor the other, but rather a mass of people in the middle, who may be vaguely sympathetic to the issue presented but are a little sluggish and sleepy about it. They may assent but they are not really active, and the purpose of the Documentary Drama is not to be for or against some small issue as to get people actively involved in the decisions that affect not only their lives but the quality of life of entire societies.

Yet another reason why Documentary Theatre has potential as a polemic art form is that the dramatists write not only for their audiences but about them. These are not plays solely about the Pope, the physicists, Auschwitz, or Vietnam, but about those who were 'a little sluggish and sleepy' in opposing them. The dilemma is put before the audience, and the playwrights demand of the audience that they become active participants rather than passive observers in the society in which they live.

As long as such an audience exists, and urgent reasons exist why they should be roused from their semi-slumber, there is a place for Documentary Theatre.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

¹Peter Weiss. "The Material and the Models." op. cit., p. 41.

²Peter Bauland. op. cit., p. 209.

³Ruth Berghaus. "Documentary Drama, Some Examples." World Theatre. (1968, Vol. 17, No. 5-6), p. 405.

⁴Peter Brook. "Documentary Drama, Some Examples." op. cit., p. 403.

⁵Victor Casaus, Denia Garcia, and Jorge Fuentes. "Documentary Drama, Some Examples." op. cit., p. 409.

⁶Peter Weiss. "The Material and the Models." op. cit., p. 42.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Rolf C. Zimmerman. op. cit., p. 123.

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