

Bertolt Brecht  
Centenary Essays

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### Comic Reduction and Comic Negation in Brecht

Many comedies end happily – either because of artifice, as when the comic protagonist suddenly inherits a fortune from a distant relative, or because of genuine development, as when the comic character overcomes an (often self-imposed) obstacle and joins in an overarching harmony. Brecht's comedies are not of this kind. Instead, Brecht works with those subgenres of comedy that stress unresolved contradictions and ask viewers to resolve the tensions portrayed on stage outside the dramaturgical arena – in consciousness and in life. I would like to sketch the two forms of comedy Brecht employs, what I call comic reduction and comic negation. Much of the discussion of Brecht and comedy has focused on the extent to which epic theater draws on the comic tradition.<sup>1</sup> Certainly the concepts of contrast and contradiction and the breaking of the illusion of verisimilitude are common to both forms of drama, but this tells us little about the general and specific ways in which works by Brecht can be related to the comic tradition. This essay, therefore, attempts to view Brecht's comedies more fully in the light of different comic types. After defining what I call the comedy of reduction and illustrating it with what is arguably Brecht's greatest comedy, *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*, I turn to what I call the comedy of negation and illustrate it with aspects of several of Brecht's other comic dramas.<sup>2</sup> The essay seeks to render transparent Brecht's development of certain basic comic structures and to shed light on individual comic works.

#### *Comic Reduction*

In a subgenre of comedy I call the comedy of reduction, the comic protagonist longs for truth and goodness but reduces these values to the lowest, most primitive level. Though the comic subject has valid goals, he cannot attain them owing to a lack of insight or will. Failing in this way, the protagonist reduces his goals, ending in effect with invalid goals. Consider, for example, Lessing's *Die Juden*, where intersubjectivity is reduced to a limited move toward recognition of the rights of the other, or Schnitzler's *Anatol*, where love is reduced to ephemeral and instrumental relationships. Like much of comedy, reduction thematizes the base inclinations, passions, and drives of the self: sexuality, desire for power,

insatiable hunger or thirst. The protagonist of reduction is far from free, for his actions are determined not by reason but by his lower desires and the external world that feeds these desires. Our laughter and enjoyment are especially pronounced when the protagonist views this apparent spontaneity – whereas he is in fact determined by circumstance and arbitrary, finite desires – as the highest expression of freedom.

In the comedy of reduction the hero does not hold his goal high and simply fail to attain it; on the contrary, he reduces his goal and generally sees himself as realizing it. He is like the drunk who decides to pass by the pub without entering and after passing it decides to go in to reward himself for having passed it. Where the tragic hero remains consistent and accepts consequences, including guilt, the comic hero gives in, indulges himself, and shifts perspectives. Again, the hero of reduction is not consciously or intentionally evil or corrupt. He is simply led to violations of proper behavior by way of his weak reasoning or lack of will, yet spares no imagination in creating deceptions that serve to justify his reduced existence. At times the comic deed arises from appropriate reasoning but a false premise. So, for example, the actions of Shakespeare's Malvolio, who has – like many a comic hero of reduction – so high an opinion of himself that he is easily fooled by his vanity.

Brecht's most successful comedy, *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*, is an example of the comedy of reduction. In Brecht's play we see the two major forms of asymmetry in comedy: the Don Quixote motif of the subordination of the servant, and the Don Juan motif of the subordination of women. The inversion of truth (and intersubjectivity) we see in the comedy of reduction is mirrored in the frequency with which asymmetrical master-servant and male-female relations arise. Puntila desires friendship, yet his friendship remains asymmetrical. Puntila *commands* Matti to be his friend and so cancels the attempt at friendship. We also see Puntila's intuitive desire for love in his collecting brides, but again his actions undermine this higher form of intersubjectivity. Puntila cannot take each one as his wife; his attempts at love quickly pass over into possession.

The attaché illustrates another limited form of intersubjectivity. Admittedly, the attaché is a fool, but because of his lack of knowledge and resulting lack of subjectivity he is unable to think or act with prejudice. The attaché doesn't even recognize that the joke he hears is not a bad joke missing a punchline, but an anti-Semitic joke understandable only to those aware of prejudice (BFA, 6, 344).<sup>3</sup> The positive moment here is the attaché's lack of

prejudice, but the negative side is his inability to recognize enmity in others. His intersubjectivity is, if for different reasons, as deficient as that of Puntila.

A symmetrical conversation takes place only on the fringe of this society. Laina and the Pröbstin discuss mushrooms. Though cooking mushrooms is a hobby for one and a necessity for the other, the stress here is on equality, on energetic discourse that bridges two spheres of society. Again it is intersubjectivity at the lowest level: the conversation is restricted to the trivial (it is not about love or friendship but about food), and the exchange takes place only among one segment of society, women.

A hidden irony in the piece is that even when drunk Puntila remains a master: he orders his servants, he talks about himself, and he fails to listen to others.<sup>4</sup> His vision of the world becomes increasingly simplistic: Puntila fancies himself a near Communist, he thinks that everyone should be his friend, and he is convinced that work contracts are no longer needed. Puntila's lack of perception is brought to the fore in a comic passage where he holds up one fork and states that when he's sober he sees only one (BFA, 6, 289). (Not only is his vision incorrect, but when he's drunk, he sees more.) Puntila's getting drunk satisfies his *individual* desires. It is a very particular structure; there is nothing universal or tragic about it. I disagree, therefore, with Walter Sokel's reading of the play as in many respects tragic.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, critics often misinterpret comic reduction as tragic. This misreading derives from two factors. First, theoreticians of tragedy often stress not the greatness that leads to tragic suffering but rather the so-called tragic flaw, which in some respects resembles comic reduction. Second, critics overlook the extent to which comedy includes the parody of tragedy. Parody of tragedy may reduce tragedy to the contradictions of society and evoke a comic world in which fate is not pre-determined; if contradictory social structures or the categories with which the comic figure sees the world were altered, a seemingly inevitable fate could be overcome. Parody of tragedy can also involve a critique of a particular tragic author's presuppositions and style. It can mock a particular tragic moment, for example, tragic pathos. At times comedy mocks the tragic hero's obsession with greatness and inability to compromise, which leads to a suffering that more balanced individuals might know how to avoid.

Above all, however, the parody of tragedy targets not the tragic hero but the comic protagonist who claims for himself tragic stature. The comic protagonist, unstable, inadequate, and without character, deems his situation noble or tragic. Comedy includes not only a negation of the substance of tragedy but also an ironization of this negation of substance. We laugh not only at comedy's justified mockery of tragic pathos and pessimism but at comic

insufficiency, the unjust erasure of tragic substance. The parody of tragedy frequent in comic reduction normally revolves around the instability, inadequacies, and characterlessness of the protagonist who nonetheless deems his situation noble or tragic. Lamenting that happiness is illusory, that nothing is secure, that the forces of the world make chaos of our lives, the hero attempts to justify, from a broader perspective, his self-indulgent despair, his inconsistency, his weakness. The comic hero is not great, and his suffering is not deep. To suffer deeply and not to speak of it is great; the comic hero, in contrast, suffers mildly and speaks obsessively of his suffering. Preoccupied with his suffering, the comic protagonist is unwilling to be hard on himself. We see a comic inability on the protagonist's part to transform himself, to learn and to change; there is no evidence of the recognition we see in the tragic hero.

The comic contrast between Puntila's weakness and his inflated view of himself comes to the fore in many ways: through comparisons with God, assertions of his own strength, and his unabashed confidence that everyone wants to be his friend. Puntila is presented as an imitation of the divine: in his position as the father of Eva; his constant adoption, and twisting, of the words of Christ; his apparent *deus ex machina* at the end of scene 3; and his creation of a mountain in scene 11. But where the primary mark of divine existence has traditionally been *manere*, or immutability, Puntila is ever fluctuating, a comic reduction of the divine. Similarly, Puntila is a reduction of the tragic ruler who seeks omnipotence and, beyond his isolation, intersubjectivity: in Schiller's *Don Carlos* King Phillip announces, 'Jetzt bin ich wach und Tag soll sein,' and longs for the friendship of the great Marquis Posa;<sup>6</sup> Puntila cries out, 'Es soll Freitag sein' and longs for the friendship of his driver Matti (BFA, 6, 286).

Puntila desires friendship, but he does not receive it from an equal, and so it is not friendship. Puntila is ignorant of the other: he unintentionally marks his ignorance by declaring work a form of fun, glibly announcing his wish to be poor, and calling herring a delicacy (for he rarely eats what is for the servants a staple). Not knowing the other, Puntila cannot recognize the other as other. The other is forced to recognize him and so does not exist as other; in short, there is no genuine recognition. Puntila treats humans as inanimate objects and, accordingly, speaks to objects, such as telephone poles, as if they were human (BFA, 6, 298). The object-status of other persons is already manifest – aesthetically – in the title of scene one, 'Puntila findet einen Menschen.' The comic hero's reduction of humans to objects is especially present in the following reply to Matti: 'Was heißt: einen Menschen? Bist du ein Mensch? Vorhin hast du gesagt, du bist ein Chauffeur. Gelt, jetzt hab ich dich auf einem Widerspruch ertappt! Gib's zu!' (BFA, 6, 287). The line is not only superficially comic:

because Puntila does not treat his servants as humans, Matti cannot be both a chauffeur and a *Mensch*. In rendering the other an object, Puntila undermines his own sense of self, for true subjectivity depends on recognition from another subject, rather than someone who has been reduced to an object and forced to recognize the other. Puntila's self is split (the idea is cleverly dramatized in the image of his calling himself on the phone), but his crisis cannot be taken seriously. Brecht was right to place him in a comedy.

Puntila views himself as tragic because he has an inflated view of his own importance, but the play undermines this notion. Puntila's parody of tragedy arises on several occasions: he'd rather be dead than break Finnish law (a tragedy of self-sacrifice to which he does not adhere (BFA, 6, 299ff), and he states that he will never again touch alcohol just as he begins to do so (BFA, 6, 361ff). Fate rules Puntila. He suffers a collision, but it is of his basest desires, and it stems, as the prologue and epilogue state, not from his inner greatness but from the circumstances in which he lives.

Other characters and spheres of society contribute to this theme. Matti says to Eva: 'Wenns einen Chauffeur heiraten wollen, ist das eine Tragödie, denn da müssen Sie sich nach der Decke strecken, und die ist kurz, Sie werden sich wundern' (BFA, 6, 353). A tragedy requires that the hero or heroine reach his or her limits. Whether we read *sich nach der Decke strecken* as an allusion to the chauffeur's limited means, as the idiom suggests, or, more boldly, as a pun on stretching to the low ceiling of the chauffeur's car, the thrust is the same: reaching one's limits is in this context easy. The farmers are not free of this parody either. The advocate discusses the fact that they easily renounce their steadfast opinions for financial reasons (BFA, 6, 342). Even Matti fits the theme. The names 'Matti/Athi' invite comparison: clearly the latter hero holds to principles and is not determined by external circumstances; Matti meanwhile becomes cynical, avoids ever taking Puntila seriously, never speaks against him, and is himself guilty of asymmetrical relations toward Eva. He, too, is a comic figure.

Matti finally leaves not on the basis of an empirical event (Puntila's recurrence of drunkenness and the dismissal of Surkkala have occurred before) but rather on the basis of his general insight into master-servant relations ('Wer wen?' [BFA, 6, 370]). Matti will accept no master until he is recognized in his subjectivity; but then no master will be recognizable, for the master will be an equal. Brecht's play demonstrates that ephemeral goodness on the part of rulers (Puntila) and momentary heroism on the part of the opposition (Athi) fail to change society.<sup>7</sup> A substantial and overarching symmetry is necessary.

Brecht was appropriately attracted to the comedy of reduction, for this form creates great distance toward the characters and stops short of any solutions. It stresses the contradictions of society. The blocking character, Puntila, is not converted at the end; he still fluctuates, continuing along his mistaken path. Puntila's allusions to a *deus ex machina* in scene 3 do not lead to resolution; they are eventually unveiled as forms of his arrogant subjectivity. Despite Puntila's charm and vitality, the audience as – Brecht insists – remains sufficiently distant to preserve the freedom of criticism (*BFA*, 24, 301-302). Comedy and morality work in harmony.

Reduction is among the most successful and popular of comic subgenres. It raises significant issues by way of the characters' unsuccessful attempts to recognize and realize truth. Unlike harmonic comedy, reduction will never risk the danger of an unearned happy end. The primary danger of reduction is that the audience, depending on the performance, may identify with the protagonist rather than recognize his inadequacies. Reduction may or may not be received as comic in the sense of a negation of the negation. The observer of comic reduction plays a central role, for the hero is comic only if the observer can distance himself from the hero and recognize the absurdity of his actions. Thus, if the first negation, the negation of substance, takes place on stage, the second negation, the recognition of the comic as comic or absurd, takes place in the consciousness of the audience. The extent to which the object is viewed as comic varies, because the values of different spectators vary as well, though the play can in its argument, its *reductio ad absurdum*, encourage the viewer to *change* his values. Nonetheless, the viewer may well be content with the appearance of the hero as he is and fail to recognize his absurdities. Because we do not take the hero seriously, we are lulled into a relaxed, indulgent view and are tempted to identify with the first negation. This was not the view of the comic dialectician Brecht, whose critique of comic inadequacy would plant the seeds for its own transcendence.

### Comic Negation

In the comedy of reduction, the hero has valid goals but insufficient means; in the comedy of negation, we see the reverse. The subject has insubstantial goals and fails, but in failing demonstrates substantial means. The audience, aware of the untenability of the hero's aspirations, is not disappointed to see him fall. Consider as examples Johnson's *Volpone*, Molière's *Tartuffe*, Goldoni's *Il bugiardo*, or Kleist's *Der zerbrochene Krug*. In this subgenre, the subject knows himself to be independent of norms of justice and duty. He decides for

himself what is right. The hero of negation sees the world as something made by humanity and thus alterable by it. Because the comic hero's subjectivity is all-important, the hero is unwilling either to enter into relations with others or to treat others as equals. Instead, the hero unscrupulously seeks his own advantage. To the extent that the hero of negation himself unveils the absurdity of his position – as when Falstaff's lies, for example, become clearly recognizable as lies – we are not disturbed by the presence of negation; we know that it will undermine itself. In this contradiction lies the comic moment. Despite the comic hero's charm and dazzling intellect, he isn't as strong as he thinks he is. His lawlessness is as self-destructive as it is fascinating.

The idea of negative subjectivity generally engenders a plurality of negative subjects. Here Brecht's comedies enter, for Brecht was concerned less with individual than with social evil. For Brecht the negation of the good is not restricted to a single individual but rather permeates an entire society or at least most of that society; accordingly, one can speak of the comedy of social negation. Just as there are finite parallels to the comedy of reduction – for example, stuttering, deafness, and so forth – so, too, are there parallel forms for the comedy of negation. Especially important here is the concept of doubling, which represents a transition to social negation. It is mildly comic when a protagonist peeps through a keyhole to spy on another; it is more comic when whoever is spying is also being spied upon, when two heads move to the keyhole simultaneously. The expansion of negation and the subsequent structure of doubling are not only comic, but in a self-reflexive sense predictable; the deceiver is himself deceived. This multiplicity creates a new dramatic constellation. Not only the hero is corrupt; the egotistical concerns of the subject are spread over society. The good hero, if there is one, is isolated in his stance against this society. All relationships are now instrumentalized. By virtue of its self-contradictions, such a society is seen to be on the verge of destroying itself. The expansion of negative subjectivity brings with it, ironically, an undermining of subjectivity. No single hero has a privileged status. While each individual claims a position of strength, the spread of power undermines these claims.

Instead of highlighting individual deviance, the comedy of social negation offers a critical portrait of the age. In many works of social negation, as, for example, Brecht's *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, not a single character is morally admirable. The good intentions of reduction are absent. When the comedy of social negation does introduce a counter-hero, the character is usually cunning and clever but faces an uphill battle; power lies with the forces of society, and society is not converted. The comedy of social negation is, like the

comedy of reduction, a comic form with a muffled happy end. The counter-hero may succeed against society, but society is not cured of its ills. He is at first the victim of a society that treats not only the outsider but even its own members asymmetrically. The counter-hero, however, resists this asymmetry through trickery. Such works proffer a spiritual countermodel to the antiquated concept that the comic hero is of lower rank; here the butt of the comedy is the higher echelon of society, those in power; the hero is the resourceful and tenacious underling. The structure of the outsider donning the disguise or imitating the actions of the forces to be ruined does more than serve the plot. Works such as Nestroy's *Der Talisman*, Zuckmayer's *Der Hauptmann von Köpenick*, or Brecht's *Schweyk im Zweiten Weltkrieg* seem to suggest, on either the symbolic or literal level, that these societies are ultimately self-destructive. The outsider who adopts the tricks and techniques of the targeted society merely accelerates its internal decline.

The instrumentalization of others characteristic of social negation is especially strong in Brecht's *Mann ist Mann*, which argues that a person has no fixed identity and is determined by his environment; thus, it is possible to make him over into something else. The play suggests not only that we can externally manipulate this raw material ('Daß man mit einem Menschen beliebig viel machen kann' [BFA, 2, 123]), but also that one can transform it internally. It doesn't pay to preserve any identity that holds one back; thus, the self is willing to relinquish its entire past. Galy Gay is transformed from a weak individual – by way of lack of resistance (he can't say 'no'), bribery, intimidation, and ultimately a shift in desire – into a fierce and successful soldier, a 'menschliche Kampfmaschine' (BFA, 2, 157). What began as Galy Gay's decision to call an old elephant head a pole, and some maps an elephant, a decision that reflects the transformation of essence into function (if he can sell it as an elephant, it is an elephant), ends as a transformation of himself, the erasure of any private essence; he denies his identity so that he can survive (and flourish) as a soldier. In an inversion of Narcissus, he decides it is best not to be attracted to himself. In a further inversion, those who transform Galy Gay are later subject to his whims. In the comedy of social negation individuals act out roles; they do not develop their subjectivity as much as assume the stances society offers them. If our function in the collective is more important than our individuality, we can be made into whatever the forces of society deem fit. The malleable self easily becomes the instrument (or victim) of an evil collective. Whereas identity-crises normally originate from a character's preoccupation with his own subjectivity, Galy Gay's crisis in *Mann ist Mann* stems from his lack of subjectivity and his being nothing but a victim of social manipulation. The tragic motif of heroic

consistency, 'Mann ist Mann' with the implication 'one remains oneself,' gives way to the comic motif of ephemerality and manipulation, 'Mann ist Mann' with the implication that we are all interchangeable – and without individual dignity.

*Die Dreigroschenoper* also underscores the lack of any core ethical substance. The police officer is a friend of the criminal, and the criminal appears to be a respectable, sociable member of society. The play highlights such incongruities throughout: the gangsters dress in dinner jackets, but their deportment is at odds with their dress — this mocks not only the gangsters' pretensions but the hidden ruthlessness of the business world. Polly thanks the bandits for their (stolen) gifts and notes their extraordinary kindness. The contradiction is especially clear in the play's music: when, for example, in the first finale Peachum speaks of justice, the music is gloomy, and when he describes a brutal and pessimistic world, the music is uplifting. The audience is encouraged to see through these incongruities and recognize the self-deception and self-destruction of a society whose only measure is enhancement of the individual self at the expense of others. The play's parodistic happy end mocks our continuing blindness to these structures.

Brecht's *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches* has been viewed as his most realistic, least epic, play,<sup>8</sup> yet by its use of comic incongruities, the play creates the kind of distance intrinsic to epic theater. Its critique of National Socialism is achieved by way of a portrayal of contradictions in the ideology, institutions, and everyday life of the Third Reich. Like Kleist's *Der zerbrochene Krug*, but on a larger scale and with more at stake, Brecht's play illustrates a form of subjectivity obsessed with itself and with no regard for universal values; such a subjectivity exhibits only secondary virtues, such as discipline or obedience, which, when abstracted from the primary virtue of justice, can lead only to internal destruction. The fall of this regime is, however, not tragic, but comic; the play's parody of tragedy makes this amply clear. Brecht does not challenge National Socialism from an external measure of the good; he shows that National Socialism, by violating the law of non-contradiction, is immanently untenable. National Socialism will cancel and destroy itself.

The task of the play is to demonstrate this immanent critique and hasten the destruction of the regime before it destroys all those caught in its internal web. The situation confronting Judge A in the scene 'Rechtsfindung' illustrates this structure: the conflicting demands of different parts of society render the situation so complex that the reader is as perplexed as the judge. The presentation is intentionally confusing: there is no way out. Judge A is willing to do anything, but one cannot please a regime that is unjust toward itself. The factions of this society will cave in on each other and destroy one another.



Inconsistencies also surface in 'Die jüdische Frau'; the circumstances under which the Jewish wife lives force her to lie – even to her husband. Whereas this borders on the pathetic, the scene 'Der Spitzel' highlights the comic and absurd implications of this contradictory society. Not only does the couple lie, the family unit breaks down through the devaluation of trust. The parents even fear criticizing the weather, and they wonder whether the ten cents they gave their child to buy candy could be interpreted as a bribe. The father fears the son's revenge for his having taken away his frog, calls him a Judas, and puts on his Iron Cross. The situation drives the characters into grotesque behavior.

In Brecht's *Schweyk im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, which also mocks the Third Reich, the forces in power treat each other and minorities as objects. A hero stands up against this society and fights it – not heroically, but comically – by becoming, in an ironic fashion, part of that very society. In the comedy of social negation society appears on the verge of destroying itself; in some such comedies this destruction is aided by a hero who stands up to resist the society and does so by imitating the society to the extreme, thus exhibiting its absurdity. Schweyk is the witty underdog who knows how to keep afloat. His survival illustrates the incompetence of the regime. The state, in turn, battles with itself; in scenes 2, 6, and 7, for example, the Gestapo fights the SS. These contradictions will inevitably lead to self-destruction: the play ends with 'Das Lied von der Moldau,' an assertion of the passage of time, the destruction of the powerful, and the renewal of society.

Earlier comedies of negation, in many cases even comedies of social negation, have explicit happy ends; a fine example is Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*. More modern works tend toward muffled happy ends. First, we may see an isolated happy end where the hero prevails but society remains the same. Titus, in Nestroy's *Der Talisman*, adopts asymmetrical tactics in order to ascend in society. Such ascension can hardly generate a justified happy end. The happy end must be tacked on, through chance, to demonstrate that until society changes (and not that the individual accustoms himself to the ways of the unjust society) an earned happy end is mere fiction. Second, we may see an ironic happy end where the hero gets his goal only after giving in to the conditions imposed on him by society. We have analyzed such a structure above in Brecht's *Mann ist Mann*. Zuckmayer's *Der Hauptmann von Köpenick* is an equally good example: the comic protagonist Voigt will receive his pass, but only after serving a prison term. Third, the work may suggest, at times quite subtly, that society is destroying itself. Schnitzler's *Der grüne Kakadu* moves in this direction, as does Brecht's *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches*. In every case the moment of harmony is either ironized or postponed.

The comedy of social negation is generally filled with tendentious themes and a critical-satirical spirit, with the forms of negativity portrayed ranging from frivolousness to brutality. To the extent that it becomes polemical, it is privileged by those who equate literature with social criticism and disparaged by those who view art as autonomous. Social negation is endangered whenever it becomes all message. An interesting dialectic surfaces in this genre: the more extreme the characters' inadequacies are, the clearer the message; to the same degree, however, the less likely the audience is to recognize its own weaknesses in the action. Plays of this subgenre are most successful when they stress not the victimization of a character but the comic contradictions in a society that victimizes itself.

### Conclusion

Brecht's comedies do not portray the traditional happy end, but they can still be seen in the light of two comic traditions or types. Either they reveal the inadequacies of a protagonist with good intentions, who is too weak or too embedded in his age, to reach his goals, or they portray a society of opportunists who instrumentalize one another and who are ironized through their internal contradictions or absurdities and their self-destructive tendencies. Despite the numerous studies of comedy in Brecht and the many commentaries on individual plays, no other work has attempted to see basic structures of comic action in Brecht's plays. This lens offers us a heuristic device to see more clearly how Brecht uses comic contradictions to undermine weak heroes who are given to self-pity or inaction and brutal heroes who pursue evil ends at all costs. By linking comedy and contradiction in this way, Brecht shows that such characters eventually self-destruct, but not without creating victims in their wake, such that the audience's conscious attention to their actions and motivations may indeed limit the often less than comic destruction of others in life.

<sup>1</sup> The connection between epic theater and comedy is supported, for example, by Reinhold Grimm, 'Komik und Verfremdung', in *Strukturen: Essays zur deutschen Literatur* (Göttingen, Sachse, 1963), pp. 226-247 and Helmut Arntzen, 'Komödie und episches Theater,' *Der Deutschunterricht* 21/3 (1969), 67-77. It is questioned, for example, by Jan Knopf, *Bertolt Brecht: Ein kritischer Forschungsbericht* (Frankfurt, Athenäum, 1974), pp. 32-37 and Rainer Warning, 'Elemente einer Pragmasemiotik der Komödie' in *Das Komische*, ed. Wolfgang Preisendanz and Rainer Warning (Munich, Fink, 1976), pp. 279-333. The thesis is also weighed by Peter Christian Giese in his lengthy study of Brecht and comedy, *Das Gesellschaftlich-Komische: Zur Komik und Komödie am Beispiel der Stücke und Bearbeitungen Brechts* (Stuttgart, Metzler, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> These two subgenres of comedy are analyzed more fully in my forthcoming book, *Tragedy and Comedy: A Systematic Study and a Critique of Hegel* (Albany, SUNY, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Brecht is cited according to the *Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*.

<sup>4</sup> See E. Speidel, 'Brecht's "Pantila": A Marxist Comedy,' *Modern Language Review* 65 (1970), 319-32 (esp. 325-331).

<sup>5</sup> See Walter Sokel, 'Brecht's Split Characters and His Sense of the Tragic,' in *Brecht: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Demetz (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1962), pp. 127-37.

<sup>6</sup> Schiller, *Dramen II*, ed. Gerhard Kluge (Frankfurt, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989), p. 865.

<sup>7</sup> Athi's heroism is momentary, owing not to the hero's fickleness but to the inevitable demise of the consistent resistance fighter.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Georg Lukács, 'Es geht um den Realismus,' in *Die Expressionismusdebatte: Materialien zu einer marxistischen Realismuskonzeption*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Schmitt (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1973), pp. 229-230.