



# Lulu-journal

Nr.8

“How Much Is Your Iron?” A report by Agentur”

Jan 2021



Christoffer Paues, *Trio no 5 for the Popular Fronts*, 2021

## → Contents

*Introduction to How Much Is Your Iron?*

Rikard Heberling

Page 2

*Ruth Berlau and the Workers' Theater*

Ingela Johansson

Page 4

*Attempt to Live in Direction by Brecht*

Martin Högström

Page 6

*Some Notes on the Concept of "Neutrality"  
and Swedish Neutrality Politics Around  
the Start of World War II*

Emma Kihl

Page 7

*Lulu Letter*

Ulla Rhedin

Page 10

*The Undivided People*

– *On the Hypothesis of Radical Democracy  
in Peter Weiss (Part 1)*

Kim West

Page 12

*Writer Presentations*

Page 19

*Colophon*

Page 20

→ *Introduction to  
How Much Is Your Iron?*  
Rikard Heberling

The point of departure for this issue of *Lulu-journalen* is the German playwright Bertolt Brecht's one-act play *How Much Is Your Iron?* (*Was kostet das Eisen?*). The play is an allegory of Sweden's activities at the time of the outbreak of World War II. The focus is on Swedish iron ore exports, which contributed significantly to Nazi Germany's armament while Sweden declared itself neutral in the escalating conflict.

The play was written during the period when Brecht lived in Sweden between April 1939 and April 1940. Prior to that he had lived six years in Denmark, where he had come as a political refugee after the Nazi takeover in Germany in 1933. In Denmark, Brecht lived with his family, the actress Helene Weigel and their two children, as well as his assistants Ruth Berlau and Margarete Steffin.

The aggressive expansionist policy pursued by Nazi Germany in 1938 made Brecht's existence in Denmark increasingly uncertain. Nazi Germany annexed Austria in March, and in October Sudetenland was incorporated from Czechoslovakia. In March 1939, additional areas were occupied in Czechoslovakia. Brecht applied for a visa in the United States, but the process was slow. Instead, he turned to Sweden. His contacts in the Swedish "Spanienkommittén" (an organization formed in solidarity with the Republican faction in the Spanish Civil War), including the author Henry Peter Matthis and the Social Democratic parliamentary member Georg Branting, helped him with the application. Sweden's restrictive refugee policy and the prevailing fear of communists were not in Brecht's favor, but eventually a visa was granted through an official invitation from the National Association of Amateur Theater and the Stockholm Student Theater. Brecht was asked to give lectures on "community theater, amateur theater, and experimental theater" and, together with Weigel, to work with amateur theater groups. In April, he traveled with his family, Berlau and Steffin, to Sweden, where they settled in Lidingö outside Stockholm.

A first version of *How Much Is Your Iron?* was completed in June 1939. During the summer, Berlau and Brecht worked on a performance of the play as part of a course for amateur theater leaders at Tollare Folkhögskola outside Stockholm.

Berlau was the director. In her memoirs, she says that Brecht found traveling to the rehearsals strenuous and therefore left the responsibility to her. The fact that Berlau spoke Danish facilitated the work since the play was to be performed in Swedish. Part of the reason why Brecht avoided rehearsals was also that his visa was conditional on him not expressing anything that could irritate the strained relations between Sweden and Nazi Germany. Given the content of the play, it is understandable that Brecht distanced himself from the performance. This is also evident in the choice to use the pseudonym John Kent – the supposed "Englishman" in the play's introduction – as the author. According to Arne Lydén, who participated in the set, the play also provoked reactions that could threaten Brecht's visa. Comments like "This is none of your business, foreigner!" could be heard from the audience. Similar views had been expressed in the Danish press a few years earlier in connection with the performance of *Round Heads and Pointed Heads*, a satirical depiction of Nazi Germany and racial biology. Several critics, in both Nazi and liberal newspapers, believed that the play endangered Danish-German relations and demanded that Brecht be deported.

*How Much Is Your Iron?* premiered at Tollare Folkhögskola in August 1939. One of the spectators, Sture Bohlin, would later describe the performance as "slightly shocking. The actors appeared in large papier-mâché masks, pure carnival figures, which made any attempt at personal role-playing quite impossible. The intention here was that the individual actor's way of giving character to his role would not introduce any irrelevant element in the mathematically clear consequences of the conflict. The individual role did not represent any individual type of person, it represented a collective factor in the development of events."

At the same time as the play was being performed, the preparations for the war were in their final stages. On August 23, the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was signed, paving the way for the invasion of Poland and the beginning of World War II on September 1. Swedish iron ore exports to Nazi Germany continued until 1944.

The performance in August 1939 was the only one made during Brecht's lifetime. A draft of the play was found after Brecht's death and was not published until 1966 in *Gesamtausgabe: Stücke 13*. The edition also contains the one-act play *Dansen*, which was written around the same time as *How Much Is Your Iron?* and addressed

Denmark's relationship with Nazi Germany. In connection with occasional performances in Sweden, adaptations to Swedish have been made by, among others, Ingegerd Bergström and Gustaf Dannstedt. In Herbert Grevenius' and Ulla Olsson's interpretation, *How Much Is Your Iron?* was performed as a radio play on Swedish Radio in 1980. But a complete Swedish translation of the German original edition has so far not been available, which has motivated the present interpretation by Jörgen Gassilewski.

#### References:

Sture Bohlin, "Bert Brechts sverigetid", *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 10/9 1959.

Bertolt Brecht, *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe: Stücke 5*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988.

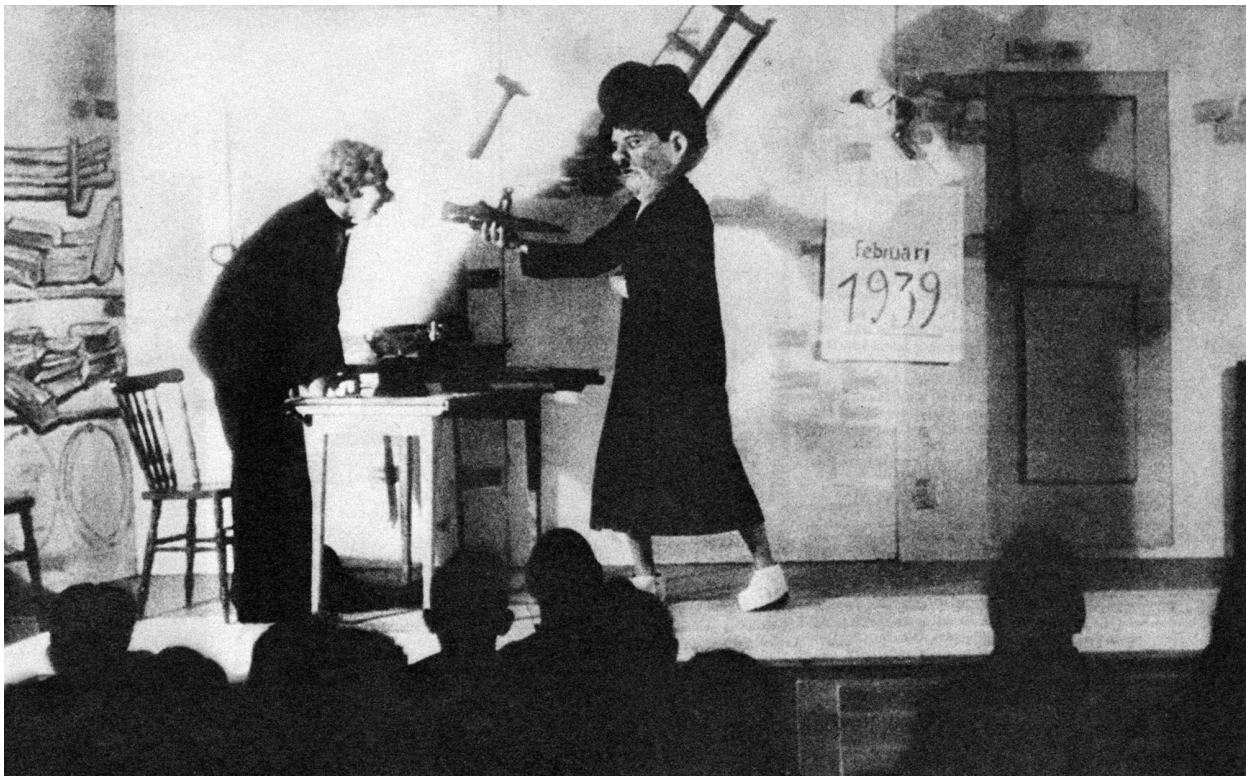
*Brecht-Handbuch 1: Stücke*, ed. Jan Knopf, Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001.

*Brechts Lai-tu: Erinnerungen und Notate von Ruth Berlau*, ed. Hans Bunge, Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1985.

Herbert Grevenius, *Brecht – liv och teater*, Stockholm: Sveriges Radio, 1964.

Jan Olsson, "Kontakte Brechts mit schwedischen Theatergruppen", *Nerthus*, vol. 3, 1972.

Willmar Sauter, *Brecht i Sverige*, Stockholm: Akademitlitteratur, 1978.



Performance of *How Much Is Your Iron?* at Tollare Folkhögskola in August 1939. The image was originally published in *Folket i bild*, no. 50, 1959 (Erwin Leiser, "Brecht i svensk landsflykt"). Photographer unknown.

→ *Ruth Berlau and the  
Workers' Theater*  
Ingela Johansson

Ruth Berlau, who directed *How Much Is Your Iron?* in Sweden, had met Bertolt Brecht in Denmark. In her autobiography *Living for Brecht: The Memoirs of Ruth Berlau*, she describes her own commitment to working theaters in her homeland, and the influence she exerted on Brecht's continued work. It also emerges that it was mainly through collaborations with workers' and amateur theaters that Brecht was active during his exile period in Sweden. In addition to *How Much Is Your Iron?*, which was performed at the Tollare School of Adult Education (*folkhögskola*), Brecht also collaborated with The National Association of Amateur Theaters (*Amatörteaterns Riksförbund*) in Västerås, where *Señora Carrar's Rifles* was performed, a play about the Spanish civil war that he had written a few years earlier, in 1937.

Ruth Berlau first learned of Brecht's work in 1930, when she played Anna Balicke in his drama *Drums in the Night*. Berlau was at this time a student at The Royal Drama School in Copenhagen, and made her debut in Brecht's play in her capacity as an actor at Per Knutzon's The experimental stage (*Forsøgsscenen*). Knutzon then founded a free communist theatre group, the Revolutionary Theater (*Revolutionært Teater*) together with Berlau and Lulu Ziegler, in 1932. A year or so later Berlau met Brecht in Skovbostrand, and without his knowledge brought his play *The Mother* along to Denmark, where she translated it and staged it at the Revolutionary Theater in 1935. The play is based on Maxim Gorky's novel *A Mother* from 1905, and describes the revolutionary radicalization of a mother. It is an experimental "*lehrstücke*", learning play, set to music. Berlau gradually gained a more prominent role in Denmark's first workers' theater and sought support from Brecht as a teacher. Early on their exchange concerned translation issues, but gradually questions of directing and production became more prominent.

It is established knowledge that Brecht depended on collective working processes. During his exile in Scandinavia it became increasingly difficult for him to attract people to collaborate on his plays. Elisabeth Hauptmann, Margarete Steffin, and his wife Helene Weigel were all women who to different degrees were involved in Brecht's practice as a writer, dramatist, and director. In

Denmark Ruth Berlau joins him and also becomes his mistress.

In Herbert Grevenius's *Brecht: liv och teater*, Berlau is presented as the one who introduced Brecht to the Danish cultural scene. There is a circle of established artists, actors, and writers. According to Grevenius, Berlau has a clearly articulated and significant role. The journalist Sture Bohlin describes her as a passionate woman on a motorcycle, wearing a black tuxedo outfit, silk stockings, and high heels. The actor Naima Wifstrand notes that she drives around in Brecht's Ford wearing a well-used leather jacket. After many years, Brecht can now return to the practice of theater. In Copenhagen he has access to the Revolutionary Theater, whose ensemble consists of amateurs from the working class as well as professional actors.

In *Living for Brecht*, Berlau recounts how Brecht collects material by making people tell him their own and others' stories. Described by herself and others as an unafraid person, she is "hands on" and a committed communist, with a true and deeply felt empathy for the working class. In her autobiography she writes about a writers' congress where she participates together with Brecht, which then continues in Madrid. Brecht goes back home and Berlau engages more directly in the Spanish civil war.

She returns to Denmark and Brecht expresses disappointment that she is not able to give a more detailed account of the political context, which is of more interest to his work. What Berlau is able to do, she says, is to tell of *individual destinies*, of the personal sufferings of those who have in different ways been affected by the war.

According to Grevenius, however, Berlau's trip was more work-related than she admits. Berlau was supposed to go to Spain to do research for *Señora Carrar's Rifles*, but instead she travelled to the front and took up arms.

With some help from Berlau's accounts Brecht then writes the play together with Margarete Steffin. Like *The Mother*, it tells the story of a woman who rejects her passivity in favor of collective struggle. After having prevented her sons from joining the war, she takes up arms herself and at a decisive turning point in the play marches out to the front.

With the express purpose of supporting the republican side in the Spanish civil war, Berlau produced a performance of *Señora Carrar's Rifles* at the social democrat Workers' Theater (*Arbejdernes Teater*) in 1937, and at Borup University (*Borup Højskole*) in 1938, with an ensemble featuring

actors from both the Workers' Theater and the Revolutionary Theater.

The play was also performed in different cities in Sweden, directed by among others Berlau. In 1938 it had its Swedish premiere at the Odeon Theater in Stockholm, directed by Hermann Greid. In a photo from the Odeon Theater in Grevenius's book, Brecht can be seen surrounded by Naima Wifstrand, Carlo Derkert, Berlau, and several others. The following year the play was performed in a production by the German actor and director Curt Trepte, who worked as an instructor at the Amateur Theaters' Association in Västerås. The production travelled to several cities, and was played at among other places an outdoors theater at the Eskilstuna People's Park, during the Social Democratic Youth days.

In connection to the performance Brecht says the following:

Ever since I worked with amateur theater in Berlin I have been interested in that form of theater. A normal professional actor does not have much contact with everyday life in shops and factories, with the masses and the working life.

In her memoirs, Berlau writes that she found it difficult to translate Brecht's *The Mother* and *Señora Carrar's Rifles*. When she attempted to place herself closely to a technically satisfying or even correct interpretation of Brecht's language, the results were flat. It was only when the actors themselves adjusted the language, during rehearsals, that it came back to life. It was through practice and through actual use of the text, that the manuscript was fully realized. The translation of *The Mother* was corrected while the actors spoke their lines, Berlau says. It is tempting to imagine how the rehearsals for the agitprop play *How Much Is Your Iron?* looked. Were the lines adjusted in parallel to Berlau's directing? And how was it that the comical element was so strongly emphasized? The subject was deeply serious, but it was vital to be able to laugh.

I started to work with some members of a Swedish social democratic workers' theater, and then Brecht joined to help. In his hands our agitprop acting was transformed into something closer to slapstick comedy. Brecht insisted that the hair of the actor who played the iron salesman should stand up straight, like on a clown. We were able to arrange this with the help of a wig. (Ruth Berlau)

References:

Bertolt Brecht, *Journals 1934–1955*, London: Routledge, 1993.

Ruth Berlau, *Living for Brecht: The Memoirs of Ruth Berlau*, ed. Hans Bunge, trans. Geoffrey Skelton, New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1987.

Herbert Grevenius, *Brecht: liv och teater*, Halmstad: Sveriges Radio, 1964.

"Passiviteten blir Europas undergång", *Eskilstuna-Kuriren*, 1939-08-07.

"Senora Carrars gevär", *Eskilstuna-Kuriren*, 1939-08-07.

Benedikt Hjartarson, Andrea Kollnitz, Per Stounbjerg, and Tania Ørum. *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries 1925–1950*, Leiden: Brill / Rodopi, 2019.

"Ruth Berlau (1906–1974)", Dansk Kvindebiografisk Leksikon. <https://www.kvinfo.dk/side/170/bio/128/>

→ *Attempt to Live in Direction by Brecht*  
Martin Högström

I purge the area of everything magical so as to avoid hypnotic tensions. With a definite gest of showing. My way of thinking, is it of importance? Ramifications of chemically graded fields. And collects, controls ideas and actions. Make them clot. In thick clouds that I measure. I examine and understand my own behavior as well in all its peculiarities. I take nothing for granted as something that “was bound to turn out that way” or “only to be expected from a character like that”. I memorize what astonishes me and I think my thoughts as authentically as I can, to the best of my abilities and knowledge of others. With the attitude of somebody who is astounded and contradicts. I do not speak the words as if improvising them myself but like a quotation. And bring everything with me that does not exist, becoming its own opposition. A darkness, a hidden space. Throw something out that stings and sit down behind her, holding her body. Sort of crouch over her. Especially my right hand. And it is difficult to steer when it bounces downhill. But we cling on. Until the speed decreases. A few breaths. An imposed fear rushing up on us from behind. And hits the back with a thump. Against the spring system that is the body. The mass of time that constantly seems to come running from behind. And hits the lungs. We breathe. Distant voices. An impression of ease, of difficulties overcome. Since I do not identify with myself I invite you, who are likewise not asked to identify yourself, to criticize the person in front of you. Hoping that what has fallen will stay a while before withering in a heat far too intense. The attitude which I adopt is *a socially critical one*. Detached from the past. A cover whose surface reveals more than what is underneath, that doesn't mean much, consists of an accumulation of named units, formations. Branches. Talk. Evidence.

→ *Some Notes on the Concept of “Neutrality” and Swedish Neutrality Politics Around the Start of World War II*  
Emma Kihl

What does it mean to be neutral?

Perhaps it is as Isabelle Stengers provocatively suggests: to meet a situation neutrally, and not from some position of objective rationality, is one of the most perilous things one can do, since it implies an inherent practical engagement. It entails no prescribed methods, does not start from a position of judgment, but instead provokes the thought to respond to and actualize the possibilities of a particular situation.

Reflecting on being neither-nor. Is it the same as trusting possibility? To show pragmatic care for what is articulated through an event? Or is it on the contrary to submit to general interest, in the belief that there is something that might be at once relevant and distinct?

To be neutral is to affirm delay without declared loyalty. According to Stengers it implies a distribution of roles and an active participation in the representation of the problem or the conflict.

What we know is that most of the time, with “neither-nor”, there are few that can be neutral. At least over time.

Neutrality concerns political lines and strong cultural traditions.

\*

Neutrality is a concept of diplomacy and international law that stands for non-participation in military alliances and wars. Central to neutrality is military impartiality in wars and therefore also an expressed will to respect those rules of international law that, when war has been declared, distributes rights and obligations between the states in the conflict and the neutral states. Sweden has chosen to stand outside of military alliances in order to be able to choose neutrality in wars between other countries. Switzerland has chosen permanent neutrality, which has been accepted by other countries.

Swedish neutrality has a long tradition. It is an actively elected temporary neutrality, which includes no demands of international law regarding the contents of neutrality policy during peacetime.

Soon after the country ceases to be a great power in Northern Europe around the beginning of the nineteenth century, neutrality is presented as a possible attitude to the war, which never breaks out, between England and Russia. Since then, there has been peace.

Sweden takes a position of neutrality in the war between Austria and Prussia in 1866.

And also in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870-1871.

On Friday September 1, 1939, Sweden’s prime minister Per Albin Hansson declares, over what I imagine are crackling radio waves, that the terrible has happened. Germany has invaded Poland and “for Swedes it is now important to calmly and decisively unite around the great task of keeping our country outside of the war, of nurturing and defending our inalienable national values, so as to master the challenges of these evil times in the best possible way. The desire for complete neutrality that animates and unites our people has [...] today been announced.”

On the morning of November 30, the same year, Soviet artillery opens fire and infantry crosses the border at the Karelian Isthmus north of the Lake Ladoga.

Sweden then changes its “desire for complete neutrality” and declares that the country is a non-combatant part in the war between the Soviet Union and Finland. And a wave of emotions sweeps across Sweden and the opinion affects the government’s decision to silently support Finland through the free corps, without official support from the government. This shift clears the path for the habit of tolerance, what Stengers would describe as a machine of hegemony that rejects differences. But it also shows how a problem could unite people in collective thinking through resistance.

As a non-combatant rather than a neutral part, Sweden can choose to aid Finland through material support, air force, and voluntary units, employed by the Finnish army.

In April 1940, Germany invades Sweden’s neutral neighboring countries Denmark and Norway. Countries that run along almost the full western border of Sweden, with a strait separating Sweden from Denmark. Norway’s border runs from the western shore of the Iddefjord in Bohuslän, up to the Three-Country Cairn, and there is at this time no military presence either in Kiruna or in Riksgränsen.

But through a combination of pragmatic Realpolitik and geopolitical location, Sweden manages to avoid attack from the Germans. As part

of the deal, Sweden allows the Germans to travel by Swedish railway along the Norwegian border, to reach further north than the Norwegian tracks can take them. In December 1940, Sweden also enters into a trade agreement with Germany.

Swedish resources are sold and so contribute to Germany's rearmament.

Anticipating this, Brecht writes, in the play *How Much Is Your Iron?*, from 1939:

SVENDSON *takes it hesitantly. Uneasily:*  
But you see, I've only got a small iron business. I can't get mixed up in the quarrels of the big corporations. Some of my customers might take it amiss if I were to join this kind of organization.

Everyone maintains good relations with Sweden, Brecht writes, because Sweden is one of the few European countries that can deliver tons of iron ore. Svendson says: "Even when they're at each other's throats, they've got to treat me with respect. Because they need my iron." In the play, Svendson manages to stay out of the conflict, remaining apparently loyal with his neighbors who are threatened and murdered, and maintaining good relations with his customer.

This is also the winter in northern Europe when strong winds combine with cold air, resulting in record temperature drops. A strong cold wind is something you must take personally, an upset friend says.

Another voice explains the central element of military neutrality. Neutrality occurs in conflicts between parties. The purpose of neutrality is to stay out of the conflict. Neutrality is a political means for achieving this purpose. Which means that if there are difficulties with this purpose, then the politics is changed.

MRS CZECH: The whole neighborhood's talking about it. They want to organize a police force. We must all join up. You too, Mr Svendson.

SVENDSON *dismayed:* Me? No, that's impossible. I'm not cut out for police work, Mrs Czech, not in the least. I'm a peace-loving man. Besides, my iron business takes up all my time. I want to sell my iron in peace, that's enough for me.

[---]

THE GENTLEMAN: And you think Whatsisname wouldn't need your iron any more if you were to join our peace league that would guarantee your security and everyone else's?

SVENDSON: Of course he needs my iron.

I honestly don't know what he does with it...

THE LADY *amiably:* He makes machine-guns!

SVENDSON *ignoring her information:* As I've said, I don't know, but he'd probably have to buy it even then. Only, as I said before, it might make him angry, and you see, I just happen to be the peaceful kind. To be perfectly frank, I'm expecting him now, and I'd rather he didn't find you in my shop. He's uncommonly sensitive and quick to take offence. So you'd be doing me a favor if..

In Sweden the concept of neutrality is gradually redefined. Measures are camouflaged to protect neutrality. I read a text that explains that decision makers in Sweden during this time see technology as something neutral, which means that all decisions concerning technology are understood as neutral, which in turn makes the camouflage metaphor misleading. Instead, technological systems promote national politics, presented as neutral security policies, and so influence how Swedes understand themselves. As Brecht writes: "I can assure you that I abhor all violence", and "my motives are of the purest".

Around 1942, when Germany runs into trouble in the war, Sweden gradually reduces its trade and instead begins to support the allies, with iron ore, ball bearings, and timber.

Because in Sweden, technology and politics are not the same.

In January 1946, 146 Baltic soldiers who have fought with Germany and then fled to Sweden, are extradited to the Soviet Union.

After the war Sweden maintains that it was neutral.

After the war the country wants to set up a Nordic defense alliance.

After the war Sweden does not want to be a part of neither the Warsaw Pact nor NATO. Because if you are a part of NATO then you are bound by paragraph 5, which states that if one country is attacked, then all NATO countries are involved in the war.

Since 1948, Sweden is not neutral. Since then, the country does not belong to any defense alliances, because it wants to be able to choose neutrality in the event of a conflict.

Svendson stands up and returns to his Ling exercises and his boring music, Brecht writes. This country with a great conscience and no taste for war.





References:

Per Cramér, *Neutralitetsbegreppet*, Stockholm: Norstedts, 1989.

Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitics II*, trans. Robert Bononno, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

Hans Weinberger, "The Neutrality Flagpole: Swedish Neutrality Policy and Technological Alliances, 1945–1970" in *Technologies of Power*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001.

---

## → *Lulu Letter* Ulla Rhedin

I've been on an exciting journey with Brecht, which has taken me in many directions. I'd like to tell you some of my thoughts. It's an unusual approach for me, to leave the comfort of my ordinary concepts and be more free. Indeed, truly difficult, for someone who lost her language decades ago doing thesis work, trying in vain to write legible prose for an interested audience.

I've decided to remain within the field where I've been active for years, as a critic and a researcher of picturebooks, and a former drama and film teacher. Where I currently work, as a teacher at an art school, we've been offering postgraduate courses for professional illustrators and graphic designers for ten years, teaching picturebook storytelling (where I participate) and the art of creating comics and graphic novels (where I show up as a guest sometimes, simply because I feel like it). In the former courses, one thing we've been trying to do is to make the participants break from their existing styles and mannerisms, through a number of techniques: by convincing them to be playful, free, and wild, by allowing them to quote freely from the artworld or choose among different models and techniques, that they can then paraphrase, steal from, refer to, or allude to in tributes or intertextual references. In a following project they have then been asked to pick a predecessor from among different more or less forgotten picturebook classics, and then renew it, giving it a new actuality and a new artistic height through remediation (with the purpose of "healing"). It's been very fun and rewarding to follow this development!

My idea about Brecht and *How Much Is Your Iron?* is that we would plan another phase, a "transmediation". This would make it possible to put all of our talk to the test, to challenge our ideas about the picture book as a performative artform related to theater; now the students will be assigned the task of investigating that talk by making a picturebook out of a one-act play by Brecht! How can one medium be understood by another medium? What is won in the transformation? How can the acoustic qualities be replaced in perception? What artistic challenges would such a transformation entail? What pedagogical challenges, if we were to try and honor Brecht's didactic ambitions and critical/political aims?

And how do the challenges look depending on who the implied readers are?

If the students want to make a somewhat literal transmediation of the play, then perhaps one version of the book should be directed to young readers, at the cognitive level of early abstract thinking, and another to a reading adult audience. Then they can experiment with scenes/images for a traditional 32 page picturebook format, or make a storyboard for a graphic novel.

If you'd want a greater challenge you could address younger readers: tweens (10-13), school age (7-9), preschool all the way down to toy books and image-stories (with a lot of subtext for adults reading out loud).

The younger the age of the implied readers, the more Brecht's humoristic and comical sides must be emphasized, playing with his naivety from different kinds of children's perspectives. Here there are exciting role models in Barbro Lindgren, Gunna Grähs, Anna Höglund, Eva Lindström, Anna Bengtsson, Thomas and Anna-Clara Tidholm, etc. And even folk stories and fairy tales may have qualities that could be borrowed or quoted (*The Master Tailor*, Grimms' *Clever Elsie*, H.C. Andersen's *Tordyveln*...).

We're here confronted with interesting questions regarding *Verfremdung* effects in text and image, and how they may serve the story. How does the anthropomorphization of animals and toys function as a technique of distancing? Looking into the camera, playing to and addressing the audience/reader? Different comic techniques, for example according to Arthur Koestler's theory of humor? About this I've written in earlier contexts, for example in the anthology *Först och sist Lennart Hellsing (1989)*, where I studied how his illustrators interpreted his often wild witticisms using images, in the article "Hellsings bildvärldar".

Finally, the students must also decide how they should approach the thematic and moral issues. Brecht wrote his one-act play in an urgent contemporary political situation, during the run-up to what became World War II (so: to awaken and render aware naively sleeping Swedes). Does that content serve the same, intended effect today? Or should we ask ourselves what Brecht might have seen as the urgent issues of today? Unfortunately there is a lot to choose from. And how might this engage younger children, by playing into situations of unfairness and wrong among playmates and siblings?

This is where all of the important aesthetic decisions will then enter: artistic techniques and

modes of expression, and possible references to the scenic origin in Brecht, with his stylized characters and his “directing note” that the roles should be played in a “slapstick style”. It will be interesting to see how this will be translated into todays aesthetic, for children and teens.

---

→ *The Undivided People*  
– *On the Hypothesis of*  
*Radical Democracy in*  
*Peter Weiss (Part 1)*  
Kim West

1. The central problem in Peter Weiss's later work was the problem of the divided world.

The advantage of using [the German language] is that each word is immediately placed under harsh scrutiny. Germany's division into two states with diametrically opposed social structures mirrors the division of the world. The statements of a German-speaking author are immediately placed in the balance where the two separate value systems are measured. This simplifies my work. My writings are directly set at the focal point of opinions. But the problems and conflicts that I comment on are not bound to this specific language area. They are part of a larger theme that is today discussed in every language.<sup>1</sup>

19

With his "Ten Working Points for a Divided World" from 1965, Weiss wanted to clarify his artistic and political position in relation to the dominant political forces of the day. By publishing them he complicated his relation to both East and West Germany. His commitment to socialism – "To me, the principles of socialism contain the valid truth", his notorious statement read, in the tenth and final point of the text – caused many of his West German readers, critics, and colleagues to turn their backs on him. At the same time, his criticism of the dogmatism and oppression of really existing socialism – socialism, he concludes at the end of the same paragraph, would gain a "far more widespread following if the openness in the Eastern block were widened and a free, undogmatic exchange of ideas could take place" – caused great anger and alarm in the upper echelons of DDR cultural policy. (159)

The division of the world was therefore not only his former homeland's split into two, which mirrored the world's division into the two power spheres of the cold war. The rupture cut through the world's both sides. The Western block was breaking apart from inner contradictions and conflicts. The socialist block itself was shattered. This was Weiss's real concern with the ten working points. Socialism, he wrote, wants "the

world's riches to belong to every human being to the same extent". The people whose interests it wants to serve is potentially universal: an undivided people. But in order for socialism to be able to form a true counterforce and an alternative to "the order determined by capitalism", where "a relatively small group" of human beings "possess the earth", it must first overcome its own fragmentation. (158) The socialist world must admit that its actual organization is incompatible with the "fundamental principles" that it claims to realize. It is only through such self-examination that it can once again become a radically democratic movement, and so "gather the positive forces in the world" for resistance and change.

Weiss's position as a German writer in a sort of prolonged exile from his fragmented homeland, with a linguistic as well as political access to both sides of the divided world, gave him, he sensed, a particular responsibility – and perhaps a special ability – to pronounce this critique and self-critique. There, at the "focal point of opinions", he could work towards raising support for "the constant openness [...] for transformation and development" that for him was an "essential component" of socialism. (159) Doing so he could also respond to the criticism that came from the Western block, according to which socialism as an idea and a movement was indissolubly linked to the sectarianism of actually existing socialism and the crimes of Stalinism.

The most evident result of this work was the play *Trotsky in Exile*, a strong but nuanced critique of the revisionist history writing of Soviet communism, set up as a semidocumentary montage of dialogues between the banned leader of the revolution, and a series of figures who crossed the path of the exiled revolutionary, from Lenin, Bucharin, and Antonov, to André Breton and Diego Rivera. *Trotsky in Exile*'s first performance in Düsseldorf in 1970 was a traumatic experience for Weiss. It was met with almost unanimously negative reviews in West German and West European press, who found its political position troubling and were unable to conjure enthusiasm for its austere, detailed representations of debates between Bolshevik party potentates. At the same time it was violently condemned by East German critics and officials, who remained faithful to the dogmatic party line, with the effect that during a period of time Weiss himself was banned from East German territories.<sup>2</sup>

But the radically democratic hypothesis that Weiss developed in response to these conditions would remain central to his work throughout the

1970s: *there is an undivided people in the divided world*. It was a categorical rather than a descriptive hypothesis. There *must* be an undivided people: the experiment that tests this proposition should itself generate the state of affairs that the proposition describes. In this sense, it *must* be possible to critically reconsider Trotsky's significance in the history of the Russian revolution, and so to prove that socialism cannot be equated with revisionism and sectarian closure, but is an openly self-critical and progressive force.<sup>3</sup> That *Trotsky in Exile* was a failure does not invalidate this project, but merely proves that it can only be conducted antagonistically, in opposition to the forces that seek to maintain the division of the world.

*The Aesthetics of Resistance*, on which Weiss started work in the aftermath of the East German trauma, can be read as an attempt to verify the same hypothesis on a more general level, by placing its fundamental conflict in a historical situation where at least as much was at stake, but where the positions had not yet become fixed, the oppositions had not yet been consolidated.

2. For Weiss the answer to the problem of the divided world could be found in culture. Culture is that through which the undivided people can identify as undivided in a divided world.

When we try to explain this country's resilience we always come up against the cultural continuity. [...] Viet Nam's cultural life is the foundation of the unbroken resilience of its people.<sup>4</sup>

Peter and Gunilla Palmstierna Weiss travelled to North Vietnam via Paris in May 1968. They went there seeking to understand how the Vietnamese could resist the North American aggression. How could this people, which had been at war for generations and whose long history was a history of constant attacks and colonizations, not only survive but "launch a successful offensive against the greatest military power in the world?" "What is it that makes this nation capable of sustaining its production and its social unity even though everything has been destroyed?" (9)

During their month-long stay there Peter and Gunilla Palmstierna Weiss were repeatedly confronted with the vitality of the cultural practices of the besieged people. They saw sentinels reading Vietnamese epic poetry in the dim light of campfires. They visited subterranean elementary schools in the Viet Cong tunnel systems, where teaching could proceed as the bombs fell. They

were invited to improvised theater performances in villages, where amateur groups staged dramatic representations of their daily efforts to "sustain production", in spite of the impossible circumstances. They interviewed authors and artists who told them about their attempts to liberate themselves from the French and European cultural patterns that had been imprinted on them by generations of colonizers, and instead to seek new forms that reflected their own reality.

The culture that Peter and Gunilla Palmstierna Weiss were introduced to during their stay in North Vietnam was, Peter Weiss remarked, a primarily "national culture". The first measure of the colonizers and the occupying forces had always been to attempt to abolish the culture of the colonized, he wrote in *Notes on the Cultural Life in the Democratic Republic Viet Nam*, one of two books that Peter and Gunilla Palmstierna Weiss published about their visit. Such destruction could take place through the establishment of institutions under colonial rule, through the systematic depreciation of indigenous traditions and forms, or through the obliteration of the existing culture's material infrastructures. The recreation of a proper, national culture was therefore an essential element in the process through which the Vietnamese people could overcome its fragmentation and assemble in resistance against the attacking forces. Weiss's book on Vietnamese cultural life is largely a report on this work of construction and reconstruction, on the search to recover myths and stories, cultural continuities and linguistic kinships, repressed art-forms and forgotten modes of representation.

But in this process, the North Vietnamese liberation struggle was inevitably exposed to what Edward Said has described as one of the core contradictions of decolonization: in order to be able to claim a positive nature as an autonomous political subject, the colonized were forced to assert an identity that was in itself negatively defined and heteronomous; the fragmentation that the process sought to overcome was recreated at another level.<sup>5</sup> A national culture is inevitably a divided culture, for a divided people: it can only function by consolidating the separation between inner and outer, belonging and non-belonging. Normally such an idea would therefore trouble us, Weiss argued, but it is necessary to understand it strategically. The North Vietnamese resistance movement's national reconstruction, he held, was a necessary phase in a process that had broader, ultimately universal aims: "this work of reconstruction has no chauvinist character,

since it is performed in conjunction with the search to establish an internationally oriented, socialist social order.”

But in order for such a broader process to become actually effective, and so make it possible for an undivided people to identify as undivided in the divided world, the internationalism to which it referred must also be a reality, and support such identification. This was not what Peter and Gunilla Palmstierna Weiss experienced in North Vietnam. Instead they saw how the division of the world was still mirrored in the division of socialism.

Time and time again we have been told about the help that this country receives from its allied socialist states. We have seen the weapons, the machines, the tools, the trucks, the airplanes, we have read the reports about the comprehensive economic support, we know how greatly even the national liberation front in the south values the economic aid and the manifestations of a global progressive opinion, and like Viet Nam's population we know that without this help the country would not be able to withstand the American aggression, but nevertheless we regard all of these efforts as insignificant, as insufficient in relation to the values that are at stake. In Viet Nam we have only ever heard appreciative and grateful words, we have only ever heard of their sense of affinity with all those who practically and morally support them. Never the smallest suggestion about the insufficiency of the support or of the difficulty in accessing it because of disagreements between the donors. And yet Viet Nam, which speaks of the affinity between all socialist forces, stands alone at its advanced post, as a representative of the blood-soaked third world, alone in the armed class struggle of our time. Witnessing the great devastation of the country and the hardships and the pains that the people has endured during generations, we recognize the bankruptcy of international solidarity. (143f)

3. Weiss's concept of culture is a composite one. It combines notions of culture's social logic, capacities, and functions that draw on different theoretical and historical contexts, and that have different political implications. In his texts, culture figures as a *force for social cohesion*, as an *expression of a whole life*, and as a *sphere of resistance*.

a) *As a force for social cohesion*

This was, at the most apparent level, what Peter and Gunilla Palmstierna Weiss experienced in North Vietnam. The villagers gathered in front of the theater stage and were strengthened in their bond through the dramatization and the interpretation of a common experience. Artists, writers, and researchers sought to reconstruct a proper, national cultural heritage and thereby contributed to the formation of an independent political subject.

The idea of culture as a medium of moral, social, and political cohesion has a deep tradition, and theater has often been its privileged artform, since it not only presents aesthetic objects for enjoyment, interpretation, and exchange, but also physically assembles a group of people in a shared, lived event. In that sense, Jacques Rancière has remarked, the dream of a popular theater has given rise to what in effect constitutes a separate genre of institutional experiments throughout modern cultural history, supported by representatives of distinct artistic and political positions. “The endless history of the ‘people's theater’”, he writes, is a history of experiments conducted from “incompatible” viewpoints, by “conservatives and revolutionaries alike”, from the romantic visions of a theater that would revive the collective spirit of the ancient stage festivals for modern circumstances, and so restore to the performing arts their central role in the life of society; to the utopian dreams of a theater performance that would culminate in a sort of revolutionary communion, where actors and audience would unite in song, constituting one common body, as a reconciled humanity in a redeemed world.<sup>6</sup>

As a playwright Weiss placed himself in a critical extension of this tradition, where important impulses came from Brecht. Theater should not just unite “the people” through the collective experience of an edifying or beautiful artwork. It should provide the viewers with the means for transforming themselves and their view of the world, so as to become a “people” in a more qualified sense of the word. “Popular”, Brecht wrote in 1938, means “representing the most progressive section of the people so that it can assume leadership, and therefore intelligible to other sections of the people as well”.<sup>7</sup> Like a scientific investigation, theater should present social and political complexes as objects for critical scrutiny, encouraging the viewers to seek to understand their social conditions, so that they would be able to act in them and upon them, forming a coherent political subject.

This is – we can note as an excursus – evident in the play by Brecht that Agentur publishes in this issue of Lulu-journalen, in a first complete Swedish translation by Jörgen Gassilewski: *How Much is Your Iron?*, written during the author's exile in Sweden in 1939–40. As an allegory concerning the macropolitical situation in Europe at the moment of the outbreak of the war, it is pedagogical to the point of caricature, its flat, non-psychological characters bluntly representing the different national and economic powers of the conflict. In his introduction to the play in this issue Rikard Heberling quotes the journalist Sture Bohlin, who saw one of the play's few performances in Sweden during this period. "The actors appeared in large papier-mâché masks, pure carnival figures, which", Bohlin noted, "made any attempt at personal role-playing quite impossible. The intention here was that the individual actor's way of giving character to his role would not introduce any irrelevant element in the mathematically clear consequences of the conflict."

Indeed, the moral of the story had a near mathematical necessity: under the surface of European oppositions and alliances, there was a hard core of production relations and class interests. The "union" that the European neighbors tried to establish against the hoarse, vile, German steel customer, was merely a vain charade of popular unity, designed to give an illusion of moral respectability to the search to maintain a production system which was itself responsible for making the murderous expansionism of the hoarse German logically unavoidable and historically inexorable. The cynically "neutral" metal trade of "Svendson" merely served to reveal the inherent contradictions and falsehood of that system. It was only by questioning the profit motive as such, and the political and economic structures that sustained it, that a real people could rise in resistance against the forces that had driven Brecht into exile and was leading Europe toward disaster. Only communism could represent the "real" people, in other words, no coalition of concerned neighbors, no cross-party popular front. Class must stand against class.

Weiss did not fully accept the politics of his dramatic mentor. His radically democratic hypothesis of an undivided people was incompatible with the element of sectarianism in Brecht's position<sup>8</sup> – evident not least in the account of Brecht's Stockholm exile in the second part of *The Aesthetics of Resistance*. But with his "documentary theater", Weiss drew on the model for a critical performing arts that Brecht had developed.

For Weiss, theater should function politically by presenting social problems for scrutiny, by assembling "fragments of reality" into "useful patterns", making it possible for a group of persons to identify as a political subject and intervene into reality's development.

But at the same time it was necessary for Weiss to mark his distance from unmediated conceptions of the relationship between the artwork's audience and collective political action. "What in free improvisation or politically tinged happenings gives rise to a vague tension, to emotional participation and the illusion of engagement in present events", Weiss wrote in 1968, "is in the documentary theater treated with attention, consciously and reflexively."

[A] documentary theater that primarily seeks to function as a political forum and rescinds artistic ambitions challenges itself. In such a case, practical political action in the external world would be more effective. It is not until it has employed its probing, controlling, critical capacity to refunction experienced reality into artistic means that it can achieve real legitimacy in the confrontation with reality. On such a stage the dramatic artwork can become an instrument for political opinion making.<sup>9</sup>

b) *As an expression of a whole life*

In many respects, Weiss shared the notion of culture that he developed in his work – from the early experiments with the formal language of surrealism in the 1940s and 50s, to the documentary techniques and the political positions from the mid 1960s onwards – with the "New Left" that appeared in Western Europe during the same period. Just like Weiss reached a political understanding of his activity from within a knowledge of art's specific conditions and possibilities, the New Left developed a reinterpretation of the socialist tradition from within an analysis of the social and historical definition of the concept of culture. The search to transcend the division of socialism found its guiding principle in the experience of culture as the expression of a whole life.

Among the most influential texts here were Raymond Williams's early books, *Culture and Society* from 1958 and *The Long Revolution* from 1961, where the cultural theorist outlined a comprehensive political project based on an investigation into how the modern concept of culture was formed in relation to the emergence of

16 industrial society in Britain, from the eighteenth century onwards. The basic idea was simple: that this concept, and the values with which it was associated – which were invoked from a broad spectrum of political positions – signified that through which human beings could express and develop their lives in fullness, in a society characterized by fragmentation, by intensified division of labor and alienation. “The idea of culture as the whole way of living of a people”, as Williams wrote, was opposed to the fractured life of the divided world, so that it served, he argued in a discussion on Coleridge, as “the court of appeal, by which a society construing its relationships in terms of the cash-nexus alone might be condemned”.<sup>10</sup>

Rather than accepting orthodox marxism’s reduction of culture to an element of the “superstructure” that passively reflected an economic “base”, Williams therefore placed culture at the center of his political analysis. What he called “the long revolution” was the ongoing project through which society’s institutions would be democratized in a way that would respond to the faculties of the “whole life” that could come to expression in culture. Such “democratization” must therefore be understood in a more radical sense, beyond the rights that had already been conquered, beyond liberal democracy’s universal vote and free speech. “The pressure now, in a wide area of our social life”, Williams wrote, “should be towards a participating democracy, in which the ways and means of involving people much more closely in the process of self-government can be learned and extended.”<sup>11</sup> This process must therefore run parallel to an extension of the field of culture, where culture would not be understood merely as a limited set of artistic practices, but as the totality of what Williams described as the activities of the “creative mind”. For Williams, and for the discipline of “cultural studies” for which his texts were foundational, such an extension was apparent in the intense growth of popular culture during the same period.

A notion of culture as non-alienated life can be traced through Weiss’s work, from his account of the escape into artistic creation in the autobiographical novels *Leavetaking* and *Vanishing Point*, to the hypothesis of the undivided people in the later plays, reports, and *The Aesthetics of Resistance*. For Weiss it was in artistic work, in “the regions of the unproductive, the practically useless”, that something resembling an “independence” could actually be experienced, and a “whole life” could consequently unfold. Weiss’s discussions about this often start from a person-

al level, where the activity of the artist serves as a sort of refuge or sanctuary. Writing, he explains in *Convalescence* from 1970, can “open a valve through which we can breathe in an environment that is becoming increasingly suffocating”. But Weiss’s argument also unavoidably aspired to a more general validity. It was *because* culture was the expression of a whole life that the North Vietnamese people needed to reconstruct a common culture in order to be able to unite in resistance. A “purely” political or military mobilization would not have sufficed. Similarly, it was *because* artistic activity had a unique independence that the documentary theater could assume an attitude of observation and scrutiny, and refunction the fragments of reality, serving as an instrument for political opinion making. An “ordinary” political assembly or exchange of ideas would not have had the same effects. The search to reconcile, to mediate between these two levels of validity – personal withdrawal and social practice – generates the tension or even the conflict that propels Weiss’s later work.

16 Out of guilty conscience for our esoteric possibilities, that keep us from being exclusively active in social practice, we have sought to liberate art from the hands of the profiteers and the parasites, and declare it a common good, but this has only succeeded in an incomplete fashion, and when we toppled art from its pedestal it was only with the secret wish that we might be forgiven for our subjectivity, which time and again made us seek out the regions of the unproductive, the practically useless. [---] When I write my solipsistic isolation concerns me, the fact that I do not participate in the immediate preparations for a strike, in the coming struggles for wage-levels, when I write I want at the same time to ignore writing and to not do anything else than to battle the established relations of production and ownership, than to inform about the ongoing social crimes and organize the mass movement for subverting society.<sup>12</sup>

But for Weiss, unlike for Williams in his early texts, there was no possible solution to or reconciliation of this conflict in the idea of an extended creativity, realized through the growth and social impact of popular culture.

### c) *As a sphere of resistance*

On the contrary, Weiss perceived popular culture as something generally hostile, a force for reductive



normalization and commercialism against which he defined his artistic activity and his political existence. But it can be argued that it was precisely because Weiss insisted on arguing that culture must be a sanctuary, a refuge, a sphere of autonomy and resistance, that he could also maintain that it was something wide open, undivided, a promise of radical democracy.

In many respects, Weiss's unwillingness or inability to engage with popular culture made him an untimely artist. This is most apparent regarding his work with film – the artform with the deepest connection to the “culture industry”. In most of his production as a filmmaker – from the early, short film studies in the beginning of the 1950s, to the feature length *Fata Morgana* from 1959 – Weiss remained faithful to an avant-garde ideal, with an individual or at least intensely small-scaled, crafts-based production model and a very limited circulation, resisting in some ways film's nature as an industrial artform and a mass medium. At the levels of structure and content, the films reflected this “minor” status, rejecting established narrative conventions in favor of “laboratory experiments” that, as Weiss phrased it, sought to display “the complex and the multifaceted in a small shard”.<sup>15</sup> *Fata Morgana*, Weiss's most accomplished film, is to some extent an exception. It depicts a young man's dreamlike drift through a disconcerting, labyrinthine city. Its somewhat derivative surrealism is offset by the suggestive, nervy energy of many of its scenes, and of the at once indexical and haunting force of its images of a Stockholm undergoing irreversible transformation.

The films that Weiss made where he, against all better judgment, sought to accommodate film's industrial demands as a mass medium are, however, generally complete failures, characterized by a visual, narratological, and linguistic incoherence that suggests that the filmmaker had severe problems with identifying with his own projects. A film such as *Now What Are We Going To Do* from 1958, conceived as a “discussion film” concerning the alcohol habits of young people, commissioned by the Youth League of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, unfolds in an environment of petty thieves and greasers, leather jackets and hairstyles, rock'n roll and booze. The awkward dialogue, the clichéd characters, and the banal plot all demonstrate to what extent the filmmaker himself – except for in single images and scenes – was foreign to the environment he depicted. And that *The Flamboyant Sex*, shot in Paris in 1962, made Weiss abandon filmmaking

is not surprising. It is a failed attempt at capitalizing on “the Swedish sin”, by combining formal techniques and motifs from the French New Wave with a “daring” representation of three young Swedish women's everyday life and romantic escapades in the French capital. Despite some vaguely amusing images of Swedes on art trips to Paris at the turn of the 1960s – Weiss's good friends Carlo Derkert and Pontus Hultén can be glimpsed in shots from a street happening by Jean Tinguely – the result is a combination of artistic complacency and smug sexism.

In other words: Weiss could not assert himself artistically, could not formulate himself consistently, in the terms of the popular culture industry, neither affirmatively nor ironically. He could not place himself in its network of conventions and dependencies, closures and openings; he was unable to develop an individually or critically valid attitude with or against its vectors and energies. Instead he remained attached to an artistic ideal rooted in an earlier political and economic paradigm, where culture as such could be understood as something independent and whole in relation to the dominance and fragmentation of ordinary social relations – a paradigm where it was not yet necessary to gauge how culture itself had, through the development of the culture industry, become a force and a factor in that complex. Weiss's artistic self-understanding was forged in a context where a concept of the autonomy of culture was not yet necessarily an inherent contradiction.

We can note two things about this. First, that through a sort of irony of history it probably contributed to Weiss's breakthrough as a playwright and novelist from the mid 1960s onwards. The radicality of his rejection of the forms and the networks of the popular culture industry, and his concurrent, clear political statements, synchronized him with the political radicalization of parts of the Western European culture world in the 1960s and 1970s. If Weiss, with his documentary plays from this period – *Marat/Sade*, *Viet Nam Discourse*, *Song of the Lusitanian Bogey* – could, as it has sometimes been claimed, become a “spokesperson” for the revolutionary tendencies of the period's culture, it was because his notion of culture as independence and non-alienated life implied a total otherness, a complete subversion of the forms of established culture. His attitude was untimely, but time retrieved him.

Second, and above all, it pointed ahead to Weiss's hypothesis of the undivided people, announced among other places in the “Ten Working

Points” from 1965. The concept of “popular culture” cannot be defined without opposition to a “high culture” or an “elite culture”, just as a “workers’ culture” cannot be conceived without an “upper class culture” or an “intellectual culture”, etc. Weiss was categorically opposed to any such delimitation. He was, we could say, an anti-populist, in the sense that populism must be based on a preconceived definition of the people which is addressed by populism’s discourse. The people of populism is by definition a divided people: it can only be described through the exclusion of something other, foreign. For Weiss, on the contrary, culture must be something undivided, and in this regard, we might note, he was close to the idea of a “unitary culture” that was central to the radically democratic projects of the French Popular Front in the 1930s – a history that he would soon weave into the vast narrative fabric of *The Aesthetics of Resistance*. Weiss could not accept that the rejection of populism should invalidate the hypothesis of the undivided people.

The guardians of working culture often say that the intellectuals sit on their high horses, know it all, want to indoctrinate and lead us, while we alone are capable of changing our own circumstances. Such an opinion excludes the idea of an evolution, a maturation, and obstructs the prospect of education one day being made available to all of us. Without this process, it is not possible for the working class to gain an understanding of the tasks that have been bestowed upon them. These do not consist only in contributing to the social and economic transformation of society, but also in participating in a reconception of the means of expression. A reactionary, anti-intellectual streak has crept into our movement. Anybody who disdains erudition and an appreciation of art is opposed to thought.<sup>14</sup>

Notes:

1. Peter Weiss, “Tio arbetspunkter i en delad värld”, Swedish trans. Ingemar Wizelius, in *Rapporter* (Stockholm: Bo Cavefors Bokförlag, 1968), p. 154. In this paragraph henceforth quoted with page number in the running text.

2. Werner Schmidt, *Peter Weiss: Ett liv som kritisk intellektuell* (Stockholm: Tankekraft, 2016), p. 262ff.

3. Peter Weiss, *Trotsky i exil*, Swedish trans. Karin Johansson (Stockholm: Bo Cavefors Bokförlag, 1970), p. 164.

4. Peter Weiss, *Notiser om det kulturella livet i Demokratiska Republiken Viet Nam*, Swedish trans. Vanja Lantz (Stockholm: Bo Cavefors Bokförlag, 1969), p. 70 & 145. In this paragraph henceforth quoted with page number in the running text.

5. Edward Said, “Yeats and Decolonization”, in *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994).

6. Jacques Rancière, “Le théâtre du peuple: une histoire interminable”, in Collectif “Révoltes logiques” (ed.), *Esthétiques du peuple* (Paris: La Découverte, 1985), p. 19.

7. Bertolt Brecht, “Popularity and Realism”, trans. Stuart Hood, in *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 81.

8. See Jacques Rancière, “Le gai savoir de Bertolt Brecht”, in *Politique de la littérature* (Paris: Galilée, 2007), p. 116.

9. Peter Weiss, “Anteckningar om den dokumentära teatern”, Swedish trans. Benkt-Erik Hedin, in *Rapporter*, p. 163. A critical analysis of Weiss’s refunctioning of Brecht’s concept of “refunctioning” would here have been necessary, but is beyond the scope of this text. For a clarifying discussion, see Maria Gough, “Paris, Capital of the Soviet Avant-Garde”, *October*, no. 101, 2002, which also considers Walter Benjamin’s interpretation of the same concept. See also Elof Hellström and Samuel Richter’s contribution to this issue.

10. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780–1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 63 & 83.

11. Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2011), p. 362.

12. Peter Weiss, *Konvalescensdagbok*, Swedish trans. Ulrika Wallenström (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1993), p. 156ff.

13. Peter Weiss, “Avantgardefilm”, in *Rapporter*, s. 9.

14. Peter Weiss, *The Aesthetics of Resistance, Vol. II*, trans. Joel Scott (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

Writer Presentations:

*Rikard Heberling is a freelance graphic designer and a doctoral student in Book history at Lund University.*

*Martin Högström is a poet and translator. His latest translation is Den då (Il donc) by the French writer Danielle Collobert (Faethon, 2020), and his next book is Prison-palais, a French translation of his Fängelsepalatset (Éric Pesty Éditeur, 2021).*

*Ingela Johansson is an artist. She recently participated in Kiruna Forever at ArkDes, and is one of the artists at this year's Luleå Biennial. In 2013 she published the book Strejkkonsten: Röster om kulturellt och politiskt arbete under och efter gruvstrejken 1969–70 (Ed. Kim Einarsson & Martin Högström, Glänta förlag).*

*Emma Kihl is an artist and since 2017 a PhD student in Comparative Literature at Södertörn University. Her dissertation investigates reading with the philosophy of Isabelle Stengers.*

*Christoffer Paues is an artist. He went to the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm. For each report by Agentur during 2020–2021 he makes a Trio for the popular fronts.*

*Ulla Rhedin is a writer, editor, and critic within the intermedia research field at the intersection of art, visual literature, and children's culture. She develops this interest in different educational projects at HDK-Valand, where she teaches postgraduate courses in picturebook theory for professional illustrators and graphic designers.*

*Kim West is a critic, based in Stockholm. He is a founding participant of Agentur and a researcher at Södertörn University.*

# Lulu-journal

Lulu is how Luleå first appeared in writing in 1327, a name of Sami origin that can be translated as “Eastern Water”. This is the title of the Luleå Biennial’s journal, first published in conjunction with the Luleå Biennial 2018. For this years edition of the biennial readers are offered different points of entry to the biennial’s overall theme: realism today. The Lulu journal is made by the biennial’s artistic and invited guest editors. It is published here on the biennial’s website and can be downloaded for printing.

## Agentur

Agentur is an independent research group for critical cultural production, based in Stockholm. Committed to an ideal of social equality, it seeks to invent new forms and functions for progressive cultural work in a new, postdigital public sphere and an increasingly precarious labor market.

Within the framework of the research project *The Aesthetics of the Popular Fronts*, Agentur produces reports, comprising public events, videos, and printed publications. The publications are produced in collaboration with a number of Swedish and international magazines and publishing houses. *How Much Is Your Iron?* is report number 5.

Among other titles in the series are *Historien är inte slut* (1|21 Press), *Måste skrivas senare* (Chateaux), *Kulturhus kulturhus kulturhus* (Stockholmstidningen), *Att skriva med arbetet* (Författarskolan Biskops Arnö), *Fabriken* (Tydningen) and *Motattack* (1|21 Press). For more information, see: [agentur.ooo](http://agentur.ooo)

The research project *The Aesthetics of the Popular Fronts* is supported by Kulturbryggan.

 Kulturbryggan

# Colophon

Lulu-journal Nr.8:  
“‘How Much Is Your Iron?’ A report from Agentur”  
January, Luleå Biennial 2021  
ISSN: 2003-1254

Editor:  
Jörgen Gassilewski  
Design:  
Aron Kullander-Östling & Stina Löfgren