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# Brecht and the Writer's Workshop

**Fatzer and Other Dramatic Projects**

Bertolt Brecht

Edited by Tom Kuhn and Charlotte Ryland

## Brecht and the Writer's Workshop

**Bertolt Brecht** was born in Augsburg on 10 February 1898 and died in Berlin on 14 August 1956. He grew to maturity as a playwright in the frenetic years of the 1920s and early 1930s, with such plays as *Man Equals Man*, *The Threepenny Opera* and *The Mother*. He left Germany when Hitler came to power in 1933, eventually reaching the United States in 1941, where he remained until 1947. It was during this period of exile that such masterpieces as *Life of Galileo*, *Mother Courage and her Children* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* were written. Shortly after his return to Europe in 1947, he founded the Berliner Ensemble, and from then until his death mainly directed and supervised productions of a wide variety of plays, including his own.

*Also by Bertolt Brecht*

PLAYS

**Brecht Collected Plays: One**

(Baal, Drums in the Night, In the Jungle of Cities, The Life of Edward II of England, A Respectable Wedding, The Beggar or the Dead Dog, Driving Out a Devil, Lux in Tenebris, The Catch)

**Brecht Collected Plays: Two**

(Man Equals Man, The Elephant Calf, The Threepenny Opera, The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, The Seven Deadly Sins)

**Brecht Collected Plays: Three**

(Lindbergh's Flight, The Baden-Baden Lesson on Consent, He Said Yes/He Said No, The Decision, The Mother, The Exception and the Rule, The Horations and the Curiations, St Joan of the Stockyards)

**Brecht Collected Plays: Four**

(Round Heads and Pointed Heads, Fear and Misery of the Third Reich, Señora Carrar's Rifles, Dansen, How Much Is Your Iron?, The Trial of Lucullus)

**Brecht Collected Plays: Five**

(Life of Galileo, Mother Courage and Her Children)

**Brecht Collected Plays: Six**

(The Good Person of Szechwan, The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, Mr Puntilla and His Man Matti)

**Brecht Collected Plays: Seven**

(The Visions of Simone Machard, Schweyk in the Second World War, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Duchess of Malfi)

**Brecht Collected Plays: Eight**

(The Days of the Commune, The Antigone of Sophocles, Turandot or the Whitewashers' Congress)

PROSE

Brecht on Theatre  
Brecht on Art and Politics  
Brecht on Film and Radio  
Diaries 1920–1922  
Journals 1934–1955  
Brecht on Performance

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The cover of this edition features a newspaper cutting from among Brecht's *Fatzer* materials.

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## General Introduction

Brecht was an altogether extraordinarily prolific author. Alone and in his various partnerships and teams he wrote (going by the standard German edition) nine fat volumes of plays; five volumes of poems; five volumes of novels, short stories, and prose of various sorts; six volumes of writings on theory, practice, politics, and culture; and a stream of correspondence and, especially in the later years, journals. It is an astonishing output, the more so since he did not even live that long (he died at the age of fifty-eight in 1956). In addition, the German edition (the *Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, or the Berlin-Frankfurt Edition (*BFA*), which we, for the most part, take as our standard) gives us two further volumes (10.1 and 10.2), or 978 pages of text, described as ‘play fragments and play projects’, 48 fragmentary dramatic projects in all. The Bertolt Brecht Archive handlist goes even further and catalogues 156 unfinished plans and sketches to which titles can be ascribed. In what follows we have selected just six of these: in order to give an insight into Brecht’s writerly ‘workshop’, and simply to make these important texts available to an English readership.<sup>1</sup>

We have chosen projects widely recognized by Brecht scholars and theatre practitioners for their own intrinsic importance, for their substantial place in Brecht’s oeuvre and for the degree to which they engaged his creative energies in the years in question. They are spread through Brecht’s life from the early 1920s through to the 1950s. A natural emphasis falls in the late 1920s, simply because this is a particularly rich period of invention and experimentation. Still, this is just a selection, and it would be misleading to suggest that these texts are crucially representative of anything in particular. It is a feature of Brecht’s work that scarcely two plays look the same, and, if one did not know, one would never imagine, for example, that *Baal*, *The Decision*, and *Life of Galileo* were all by the same man. The same is true, if perhaps to a lesser extent, of these less well-known and unfinished dramatic projects.

The fact is that Brecht was constantly engaged in almost every manner of project, somehow managing a bubbling ferment of creativity out of which a huge variety of writing appeared: for publication, for performance, for the theatre, or opera, for setting to music, or for illustration, for the radio and other new technologies, for friends and private use, and then for further processes of revision, re-thinking, re-contextualization, re-combination, and recycling. In all of this, Brecht was gloriously happy to break off work on one thing and move on to the next, to interrupt, abandon, and then after all revisit. There are particular years, above all in the late 1920s, when it

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is positively dizzying to cast a look into this artist's studio. In 1927, for example, the book edition of *Man Equals Man* came out and the play was broadcast by several different radio stations; Brecht met and started working with the composer Kurt Weill, initially on settings of the *Mahagonny Songs*, which went into rehearsal in July, and would subsequently become the opera *Mahagonny*; he began work on a *Ruhr Epic*, which was never completed; he also worked with the great director–producer Erwin Piscator and is co-credited with at least one adaptation in that context; various of his plays were produced in Baden-Baden, Frankfurt, Darmstadt, and Berlin, generally with Brecht himself in attendance and working on the script in production; he reworked *In the Jungle of Cities* for its first publication; he adapted *Macbeth* for radio (a text which is lost); he worked intensively on *Fatzer*; meanwhile *Fleischhacker* had progressed far enough to be announced by Piscator, under the title *Wheat*, for the 1927/8 theatre season (both *Fatzer* and *Fleischhacker* feature in the present collection); at the same time he was still working on another project, called *Dan Drew*, which never came to fruition; he sketched a fragmentary radio play on the subject of the biblical Flood; he planned a play on *The Last Weeks of Rosa Luxemburg* and a revue which was possibly going to be called *The Neanderthals*; he published half a dozen short stories and a number of important essays; he judged a poetry competition and published his own first collection of verse, the *Domestic Breviary*; and he wrote or sketched out maybe another forty poems; oh, and as if that were not enough, he negotiated a divorce from his first wife, Marianne Zoff, and set up what was to be his lifelong conjugal partnership with Helene Weigel. That was quite a year. It is hard – no, let us be more honest – it is impossible to keep track.

Even as a schoolboy, Brecht developed a semi-improvisatory approach to literary composition, trying out songs and dialogue with friends and only later formalizing the work, if at all. By the mid-1920s he had already established something of a routine, when his commitments in the theatres and elsewhere permitted, of writing for himself in the mornings and then very often gathering a group of friends and collaborators in the afternoon, with whom he would discuss and develop certain of the current projects, experimenting with dialogue, debating the thrust and purpose of what had been written, and typing it all up. Later, someone (Elisabeth Hauptmann was the first) would be given the task of creating a formal typed record of the day's work, to which first Brecht himself, and then the team, would return the next day. The manuscript evidence we have of these processes, insofar as it is preserved in the archive in Berlin, is complex and confusing. There are the notebooks in which, for the most part, Brecht himself jotted down his first ideas, poems, scraps of dialogue; then there

are some more extended handwritten pages, plans, and outlines; and then the typescripts – often several competing versions of the same chorus or scene, sometimes with no way of knowing if there is some hierarchy of drafts or order of composition, and often annotated in preparation for the next reworking. It is true, there are also individual works which Brecht wrote in a much more concentrated and coherent, even linear, fashion, starting at the beginning and ploughing on through (*Arturo Ui* is one example, more or less written from start to finish in three weeks in 1941), but most of the texts in this volume are very far indeed from that model, as will be clear in the individual introductions to each work, which discuss in more detail the texture of the material and the nature of the processes refracted there.

Several of the texts for these projects were developed concurrently in overlapping notebooks, and it is often hopeless to try to date the work precisely unless there is also evidence from elsewhere. Moreover, several of the projects are themselves interlinked. In the examples from 1927, the projects with an American thematic and setting, *Dan Drew, Fleischhacker*, and another probably largely earlier opera plan called *The Man from Manhattan*, rework each other's material. And even in *Fatzer*, which has a very different setting, a speech from *Fleischhacker* is recycled. In this instance Brecht simply quotes the opening lines of the speech and then writes 'usw.' ('etc.'), and we have no way of knowing how much of the subsequent speech he then intended to include. Some of the so-called 'fragments' are much more extensive than others. *Fatzer* runs to some 500 pages of manuscript and typescript, some with fully drafted scenes, and others on which just a phrase or a fragment of dialogue can be ascribed to the project. That makes 142 printed pages in the German edition (so more than enough for a single play, one would have thought). But the manuscripts are by no means continuous or coherent in their organization. In contrast, *The Last Weeks of Rosa Luxemburg* consists of just four snippets of dialogue or chorus, occupying only two printed pages.

In some cases there may also be a question of authorship. Brecht himself had a head full of voices and ideas, but he was also happy to have the process fuelled by the voices and ideas of others. He was definitely the centre of all the creative activity, but he was also adept at making use of the skills and inventions of his several committed collaborators. 'Co-workers' played a more or less crucial role in the work on all the projects presented in this volume: Elisabeth Hauptmann, the writer and translator who became Brecht's assistant and then his editor; Margarete Steffin, another writer who became his close collaborator and lover and followed him into exile; Hella Wuolijoki, a Finnish writer who was his

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host for the year of his exile spent in Finland, alongside several others. Manuscripts in other hands, other typewriters, marginal annotations, and corrections all feature among the archived documents. We have tried to credit key members of the team in our editorial introductions and at the head of each project, following Brecht's practice in his early publications in the *Versuche* (Experiments) series. In short, we are dealing here with texts of very different and often contested status, and it stands to reason that the selection, edition, and presentation of the material are a fraught and equally contested business.

In this context it is a mistake to think of the 'fragment' or the 'unfinished' in negative terms. Rather, we should try to conceive of an almost continuous and multi-stranded process of invention and development, which only came to any sort of rest or conclusion in particular completed 'works' when the opportunity happened to present itself. Brecht was always working on something, or several things; it was often only when a commission came through, or another collaborator gave him a spur, or an opportunity for a theatre production was glimpsed, or a publication, that a work was allowed to crystallize. That is perhaps a bit of an exaggeration, but it is more productive to see these unfinished works in relation to a continuing stream of creativity, rather than to describe them simply as works that Brecht discarded, or could not finish. The projects presented in this volume are certainly not just works that Brecht gave up on, and certainly not just because he could not see how to make anything of them. They were, on the contrary, simply set aside for the time being, overtaken by other concerns – and who was to say when they might not be resurrected? We have enough examples in Brecht's creative output of works that we now think of as finished, which in fact went through radical reworkings: his early *Baal* (originally 1918) was re-conceived around 1929–30 as a 'learning play' called *Evil Baal the Asocial*, although never fleshed out in that form; his adaptation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* was allowed to morph into something completely different, namely his own play *Round Heads and Pointed Heads* (1932–4); *Life of Galileo* went through three very different versions, one of them in English (1938–9, 1944–7, and 1947–56). More pertinent still, an early plan entitled *Fanny Kress or The Whore's Only Friend*, of 1927–8 (again), was amalgamated with a c.1930 plot-line to which he had given the title *The Commodity Love* – a pun in German, where 'Ware' (= commodity, merchandise) sounds the same as 'wahre' (= true). Then in 1939 these plans formed the kernel for a whole new work: *The Good Person of Szechwan*. Who is to say if circumstances had been different, if, for example, he had not been forced to spend so much of his creative life in exile or, later, contending with the cultural orthodoxy of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), or if he had lived longer, which of

these works that come down to us as fragments might not have had a more illustrious and productive future?

Besides, in some cases the ‘fragment’ may perhaps be a thing in itself, not just a piece broken off some imagined ideal ‘whole’. This is an idea that has a long and elevated tradition, especially in German letters, where we think of the Romantics as the archetypal thinkers and theorists of an experience of life and art too tentative, or too fragile, or too tortured to find expression in complete and rounded works. Brecht could, it is true, hardly be further from the Romantic sensibility, but there are other models too. Georg Büchner’s *Woyzeck* was left incomplete at his death in 1837; the play was published in a heavily reworked version in 1879, but not premiered until 1913 and then published again in 1921. It had a huge influence on successive generations of German writers – Naturalists, Expressionists, and Brecht himself – partly precisely because of its unfinished state, which allowed them to project onto it their own visions for a new German theatre. Around 1928 Brecht wrote of *Woyzeck* that it was ‘technically almost perfect’ and that it was an instructive error to suggest that it could have been made more complete (*BFA* 21, 255). And in 1951, at the other end of his creative life and in another unpublished essay-sketch (*BFA* 23, 148), he contrasted the relatively formless ‘great plays’ of the German tradition, Lenz’s *The Tutor*, Schiller’s *The Robbers* and Goethe’s *Götz von Berlichingen*, with the perfectly formed fragments: *Woyzeck* and Goethe’s *Faust* – the latter of course renowned simply as the greatest work in all of the German literary tradition. A couple of years later he added Kleist’s *Robert Guiskard* to the list of perfectly formed dramatic fragments (*BFA* 24, 431). Brecht was very conscious of literary history, tradition, and his own place in it. When, in 1930, he chose to publish a short series of scenes and a chorus from *Fatzer* and spoke of it as a ‘fragment’, he was of course aware that Goethe had chosen the same genre description for his *Faust*. *Ein Fragment* in its first publication in 1790; at an earlier stage he referred to a version as the *Urfatzer*, again in self-conscious quotation of Goethe’s *Urfaust* (letter to Weigel, September/October 1928). Writing about *Faust* in 1953, when the Berliner Ensemble produced the *Urfaust*, Brecht asked, ‘Is the staging of the fragment justified?’ and answered his own question with the argument that the work belonged to a particular genre of ‘masterwork-fragment’ that, although merely sketched and with gaps in the plot, nonetheless achieved a wonderful and rich consummation: ‘The art of sculpture is not yet the complete mistress of the stone, and we catch her unawares on the very cusp of her victory’ (*BFA* 24, 431–2).

In 1939 Brecht reviewed his recent outputs and concluded, perhaps surprisingly: ‘*Life of Galileo* is technically a great step backwards, like

*Señora Carrar* all too opportunistic. ... First the *Fatzer* fragment and the *Bread Store* fragment would have to be studied. These two fragments are of the highest technical standard' (*Journals*, 25 February 1939). Following these two arguments, the one about the stream of creative outputs, the other about the potential of a genre of the masterly fragment, it seems that we might try to think of the unfinished projects documented in this volume as works in their own right, from which Brecht could learn and progress, which might well be 'perfect' in their unfinished state, or out of which he might still fashion other works.

In fact the idea of the 'unfinished' is central to Brecht's whole aesthetic. Especially as his ideas about literature evolved through the 1920s, he came to think of contradiction, which by its nature could not be resolved, as the key to a productive engagement with the world. Neat conclusions, resolutions, denouements could only ever be ironic. It was crucial to leave the audience, or the reader, with work to do. The *Lehrstück* or *learning play* experiments of the later 1920s were the first radical experiments in realizing a model of theatre in which either the participants were at the same time the audience or else the wider audience's participation was absolutely integral to the experience. The 'completion' could happen only outside the theatre, in the wider social world. Theatre events of this degree of experimentalism were really only possible in the Berlin of these years, where there were theatre professionals and an audience schooled in the political avant-garde and very largely sympathetic to Brecht's aims. In 1929 he wrote a poem entitled 'On the making of longlasting works', which includes the lines:

So too the plays that we invent  
 Are unfinished, or so we hope  
 And the tools that serve our playing  
 What would they be without the indentations, the  
 Result of many fingers, those signs, seemingly of damage  
 Which beget the nobler form  
 And the words too that  
 With their users so often  
 Changed their meanings. (*BFA* 14, 35)

In exile from 1933 Brecht had to temper his practice and reassess his options. Nonetheless, the two-pronged notion persisted that texts should remain suspended in a state of flux and that it was up to the audience to complete the arguments. The most obvious example is *The Good Person of Szechwan*, which ends with Shen Teh hopelessly torn in half, and an actor stepping out in front of the curtain to exhort the audience to find a decent ending (in John Willett's translation):

Ladies and gentlemen, in you we trust:

There must be happy endings, must, must, must. (*BFA* 6, 279)

One of Brecht's great statements of indeterminacy is another poem, this one from 1935 and exile in Denmark, which tells the legend of the suicide on Etna of the Greek philosopher Empedocles, who – we are told – cast aside his sandal before slipping unnoticed into the crater. Or, the poem goes on, perhaps it was not suicide after all; maybe he fell in. Alternatively, perhaps he had never been mortal in the first place. Or, if his death was, after all, human and willed, maybe it was not a modest gesture of one retiring from the world, but a wily effort to install himself as an immortal. There is nothing we can do to establish the 'true' ending to the story; rather, we are left with what scant evidence there is, and with our own lives to lead and our own problems to solve, as well as we may – as once also the philosopher's pupils were, who

Suddenly grasped in their hands, troubled, that tangible shoe

Worn, made of leather, earthly. (*BFA* 12, 32)

The poem is given added piquancy by the fact that, despite his reputation in the ancient world, nothing of the actual writings of Empedocles survives, except in the substantial fragments and gists quoted by other writers. It is only now, after the poem as it were, that Empedocles' followers embark on their most important lesson and begin to seek the solution themselves. Seen like this, 'fragments' are no longer the exception in Brecht's output; they are not the 'leftovers', but rather the central gesture. Coming at Brecht by way of the selection of incomplete projects in this volume, we may realize the extent to which his other works too, even the most apparently finished, may be appreciated as unfinished, as works in progress: the author himself can no longer work on them, but we most certainly can.

Of course the projects of this volume should not all be approached in one and the same way. They date from different stages of Brecht's creative life, and may have had very different status for him. It must not be the implication of a general introduction that there is a generally 'right way'. As editors and translators, we too have approached the texts in different ways: for example, the version of *Fleischhacker* presented here is a quite close and literal representation of the materials in the Archive, whereas our *Fatzer* is a much freer and more speculative reconstruction. The substantial introductions to each individual project will offer a more varied and nuanced counterpoint to these remarks.

We have chosen, in our selection, to pass over the various unfinished projects of the very early years, where Brecht worked intermittently on

sketches with titles like *Galgei*, *Herr Makrok*, and *Green Garraga* – all of which, one might argue, with their exotic settings and identity struggles, found their way in some other form into the published plays *Baal*, *In the Jungle of Cities*, and *Man Equals Man*. To some extent, the outputs of these years are already represented in the documentation of the various versions of *Baal* and the one-act plays in *Collected Plays: One*. The scraps of ideas and scenarios for plays on the subject of the biblical David, Pope Joan, Hannibal, and Alexander (all exercises in debunking heroes), or the beginnings of a dramatization of Selma Lagerlöf's *Gösta Berlings Saga*, we judged too insubstantial to merit inclusion in the present volume – which is not to say they are without interest. And so we start with the dual project of *Jae Fleischhacker in Chicago* and *A Family from the Savannah*, for which the earliest plans and sketches date from 1924, when Brecht and Hauptmann were in their mid-twenties and he was on the point of moving from Munich (and the safety of a parental home in nearby Augsburg) to set up truly independently in Berlin. It is in Berlin then that we get these seven whirlwind years of such extreme and various creative productivity. *Fleischhacker* occupies him on and off for five years, and overlaps with many other projects, including *Fatzer*, our next text. *The Bread Store* in turn, the drafts of which all date from the end of the decade, overlaps with *Fatzer*. The late 1920s and early 1930s are the years of the operas with Weill and the *Lehrstücke* (with various composers and other collaborators), and these are again fully represented in *Collected Plays: Two* and *Three*. In 1933 Brecht and his family and associates went into exile, fleeing from the Nazis, and in due course they settled on the Danish island of Fyn. Here most probably (the evidence is scanty) Brecht and Steffin developed their plans for a fable of the faceless petty bourgeois at the time of the depression, *Jakob Gehherda*, whom we have called *Jacob Trotalong*. Play projects from these years are relatively few and far between (otherwise in *Collected Plays: Four*). A *Goliath* opera was abandoned, and a *Julius Caesar* play turned into a novel. Brecht was cut off from much meaningful work in and with an actual theatre, and could see few prospects for a production: all the more interesting, then, that he should use the time for the relative experimentalism of *Jacob Trotalong*. Most of the dramatic projects, otherwise, from the late 1930s and 1940s, made their way into the familiar full-blown plays: *Life of Galileo*, *Mother Courage*, *The Good Person of Szechwan*, *Arturo Ui*, *Mr Puntilla*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. In among these comes *The Judith of Shimoda*, an adaptation of a contemporary Japanese play, which, exceptional among the projects of this volume, is more or less entirely roughed out, and all written in 1940 when the Brecht entourage was living in Finland. In 1941 they eventually escaped from Europe altogether, and they lived for the next six years in

California. Alongside the play projects of the 1940s there are various sketches for revues and musicals/operas: *Pluto-Revue* (after Aristophanes), *The Journeys of the God of Good Fortune*, *The Chariot of Ares* and, back in Europe from late 1947, *Dante-Revue* and *The Salzburg Dance of Death*, some of which, insofar as they are dependent on songs, are represented in English language collections of Brecht's poems and songs. Otherwise we have just a few beginnings of adaptations of plays by other authors. So the last project in this volume is *Garbe/Büsching*, a short and fragmentary sketch, but of enormous interest in its documentation of Brecht's engagement with the social and cultural politics of the newly founded GDR. In the German edition (*BFA*) the only other projects documented in this last phase of his life are equally fragmentary plans, albeit fascinating for their subject matter: *Rosa Luxemburg* and *Life of Einstein*.

In the case of the projects we are presenting here, only for *The Judith of Shimoda* are we translating an existing German edition (and here it is not the *BFA* text that we have used). For every other project we have gone back to the archive in Berlin and made our own assessment of the materials, before deciding how to present them for an English readership. And in each case we have been guided not only by principles of philological exactitude, but also by the desire to offer a text which is, to some degree at least, readable and usable. In other words, we have tried to make sense of the material, a sense that Brecht might himself have been in the process of making, without falsifying the record and simply fabricating. It follows from the very different state in which these projects come down to us, in manuscript, typescript, and even some published fragments, that they have each to be edited in different ways, and ways that best reflect the particularities of each collection of papers. In our own presentations, we have used a form of marginal reference to the texts as they are edited in the *BFA*, so that the reader can see just how our editions are put together and so that scholars can easily find the German originals should they so wish. The editors of the *BFA* divide the material for each project into three categories (which are in fact nigh impossible to hold apart): plans and plot-lines (given the letter A), scenes and dialogue (B), and commentary (C); and then they organize the texts according to a supposed (often extremely speculative) chronology. For our purposes it is probably only important to hold onto the fact that each marginal number – A17, B32, and so on – represents a separate archived sheet, from a different notebook or other source, and that the higher numbers probably refer to later stages of composition. In addition, while the scholarship of the *BFA* has been our overarching guide, we have also consulted other editions, where these exist, as well as the often unpublished work of other scholars or indeed theatre practitioners.

To all of these, as to the staff of the Bertolt Brecht Archive (Akademie der Künste, Berlin) we are profoundly indebted.

This is a volume which has also been, although we are primarily textual scholars, inspired and informed by practical work in the theatre. Our version of *The Judith of Shimoda* was first created for a production at the University of Hawaii's Kennedy Theatre in Honolulu in 2010. Our *Fatzer* was originally translated and assembled for a production at the North Wall Theatre, Oxford, in 2016. In addition, we have been closely involved in the workshopping and preparation of a stage version of *Fleischhacker* (London, TBA 2018–9). These three and *The Bread Store* have been several times staged in Germany and elsewhere. In some cases we have been able to consult production scripts, and we have welcomed the opportunity, while thinking about how to present our material to an English readership, to observe how it can be made to work in the theatre. As Brecht himself remarked, 'no play can be made ready without being tried out in production' (*Journals*, 11 May 1942). We offer this view into the writer's workshop now in the conviction that these play fragments are not at all just of historical interest, or merely reading material for scholars and students of Brecht, but also living, breathing works that can still make their way in the theatre.

TOM KUHN

## Note

- 1 Our main source for Brecht's own writings, throughout, is the *Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, edited by Werner Hecht, Jan Knopf, Werner Mittenzwei, Klaus-Detlef Müller and others (Berlin, Weimar and Frankfurt am Main: Aufbau and Suhrkamp, 1988–2000), which we abbreviate as *BFA*. English translations are for the most part taken from the standard Methuen Drama volumes. Where other editions are used, full references are given.

# *Fleischhacker*

**With Elisabeth Hauptmann**

**Translated and edited by  
Phoebe von Held and Matthias Rothe**

The translation was completed in collaboration with a feedback group:  
Laura Killeen, Jane Robinson, Naomi Segal, Robert Stock, Sam Williams



## Introduction

The idea for a play entitled *Mortimer Fleischhacker* is first mentioned in Brecht's journal in 1924 as part of a host of other project plans. Erwin Piscator's theatre announced it for the 1927–8 season under the title of *Wheat*. The majority of the archival project leaves, however, are simply labelled *Fleischhacker*, a heading we have adopted as the main title for the fragment which in fact resulted from the amalgamation of two play projects: *Jae Fleischhacker in Chicago* and *A Family from the Savannah: A History in Eleven Tableaux*.

Brecht and Elisabeth Hauptmann worked on *Fleischhacker* between 1924 and 1929, most intensively in 1926. In February of that year they also decided to combine the two separate projects into one. Both borrow to different degrees from Frank Norris's unfinished trilogy *The Epic of Wheat*, a set of Naturalist novels. *Jae Fleischhacker in Chicago* is based on the trilogy's second part *The Pit: A Story of Chicago* (1903). It revolves around a cut-throat commodity trader at the Chicago Wheat Exchange, Jae Fleischhacker, who attempts to 'corner' the market, that is, to control the supply of wheat in order to manipulate its price. *A Family from the Savannah* is loosely inspired by the first part of Norris's trilogy, *The Octopus: A Story of California* (1901), and focuses on a destitute farming family who come to the city of Chicago to try their luck.

*Fleischhacker* is the first play in which Brecht gives full attention to an economic subject: futures commodity trading. Its claim to fame in Brecht scholarship springs from two statements. In 1935 Brecht remembered the difficulties encountered in his work on *Fleischhacker* as a starting point for reading Marx:

For a particular play I needed Chicago's wheat exchange market as a background. I believed I could quickly gather the necessary knowledge. ... Things turned out differently. Nobody ... could explain to me the workings of the wheat exchange market. Instead, I began reading Marx, and it was only then that I read Marx. (*BFA* 22.1, 138–9)

Moreover, in a lecture from 1929, 'Latest Stage: Oedipus', around the time when Brecht was about to abandon the work on *Fleischhacker*, he proclaimed that contemporary society could no longer be represented within the classic form of drama. *Fleischhacker* supposedly signified a turning point in his dramatic writing and approach to theatre at large:

A play taking issue with the wheat exchange market can no longer be represented in the great form of drama. ... So what should be our great form? ... Epic. Reporting. Such form should not assume that it is possible to identify with our world. The materials are monstrous; our drama must consider this. (*Brecht on Theatre*, 44)

And yet, while Brecht scholarship often points to *Fleischhacker* as a crucial crossroads, it has had little to say about it. What are the reasons for the lack of interest? Is the caesura the play supposedly represents difficult to conceptualize, in particular the relation between artistic form and economic subject? Or is it simply the profoundly disjointed nature and heterogeneity of the archival material that has been a deterrent to closer scrutiny?

The three files in the Bertolt Brecht Archive comprise about 270 leaves: incomplete dialogues, monologue fragments, poetic narrations, lines of dramatic speech without assignment to a particular character, various plot-lines, aesthetic reflections, and a substantial collection of supporting material such as an excerpt of the speculation scheme in Norris's novel, notes on the technicality of futures trading, and articles from the business section of German and Austrian newspapers. The boundaries between text and meta-text cannot always be determined. The partly handwritten notes and the correction patterns show that Brecht and Elisabeth Hauptmann collaborated closely on the *Fleischhacker* project.

### **Historical context and genesis of *Fleischhacker***

When Brecht set out to investigate the topic of financial speculation, he had witnessed the hyperinflation that brought Weimar's economy to a standstill. Despite economic stabilization in 1924, unemployment rates remained high, causing unprecedented misery and starvation. The supply of grain was precarious, its price fluctuating drastically. The German press reported on the crisis in sensationalist tones, attributing it to the speculative manoeuvres of powerful financial groups in New York and Chicago. Their style was not unlike that of sports coverage: 'A million Dollars lost in speculation! Madness at the New York Stock Exchange', was the headline of the *National-Zeitung* on 4 March 1926, for example.

In this context, it is hardly surprising that Brecht turned towards the topic of financial speculation, and in particular to Chicago's Pit, the city's commodities trading floor. Chicago was familiar territory that had already served as a setting in short stories and *In the Jungle of Cities* (1921–4). American culture in general, the modernity of the American city, jazz,

and American literature were in high demand in Weimar Germany. Brecht adored Chaplin and read Upton Sinclair, Sherwood Anderson, and Jack London, as well as books on the history of American capitalism such as Gustavus Myers's *History of the Great American Fortunes* (1907). Yet with *Fleischhacker* Brecht's treatment of America undergoes a significant shift. While fascination with the image of the ruthless American pioneer fuelled *In the Jungle of Cities*, he now created a more detached take on his protagonist, Jae Fleischhacker, attempting something like an anatomy of the trader. There are nevertheless still blind spots in Brecht's reception of American society in *Fleischhacker*: For example, his adaptation of a minstrel song, *At the Tombigbee River*, testifies to an uncritical absorption of the racism inherent in the original song, reiterating stereotypes of black men as instinct-driven and carefree (see B31, in the main text of the translation).

Norris's *Pit* also inspired David Wark Griffith's *A Corner in Wheat* (1909), the film that pioneered cinematographic montage. In foregrounding the economic aspect of human interaction, both Brecht and Griffith dissolve linear storytelling. Thus their engagement with Norris's treatment of economics exposes the limits of Naturalism, with its focus on individuals and their milieu. It was, among other influences, Brecht's experience in avant-garde theatre practice that provided him with the necessary aesthetic tools for such a turn towards detachment, anti-psychological analysis, and abstraction.

As was common with Brecht, he pursued several projects simultaneously while working on *Fleischhacker*, allowing each one to affect the others. Fleischhacker's original first name, Mortimer, was carried over from *Edward II*, Brecht's Marlowe adaptation. Like the ascender to royal power, Fleischhacker ascends to become the 'king of wheat'. And much like with *Edward II*, Brecht predominantly uses here iambic verse and evokes the feudal setting of Elizabethan drama: 'I want these heroes to speak in Shakespearean verse', he remarked to his friend Bernhard Reich, 'the enterprises of the traders and money-changers – determining the life and death of tens of thousands of people – carry as much weight as the battles of the army generals did.'<sup>1</sup>

Thematically related to *Fleischhacker* was Brecht's work on *Dan Drew* between late 1925 and early 1926, an adaptation of Bouck White's 1910 fake autobiography of the railway speculator Daniel Drew. The nearly completed play still featured a classically realist approach to the main protagonist. *Fleischhacker's* genesis also coincided with Hauptmann and Brecht's extensive revisions of *Man Equals Man* (1924–6). As with *Fleischhacker*, one of the main difficulties here proved to be the plot-line, in particular how to strike a balance between the largely self-reliant

episodes and the continuity of dramaturgical development. *Fatzer* (1926–30) was also written in parallel to *Fleischhacker*. Both fragments point to a reorientation in Brecht's work: Whereas *Fatzer* is a precursor of the *Lehrstück* (learning play), *Fleischhacker*, with its primary focus on economy, marks a departure from the existentialist theme of survival in the city and experiments with new representational strategies that Brecht in retrospect associated with the invention of epic drama.

### **The use value of Norris's *The Pit*: Reconfiguring and fragmenting**

Norris, a representative of American Naturalism, tells in linear fashion and with lavish detail the story of Curtis Jadwin's rise and fall in the world of financial speculation. Jadwin's growing obsession with the 'speculation game' endangers his mental health and most importantly his love and marriage. Speculation manoeuvres in the trading pit are described vividly. The location itself, with its balconies, the trading bell, and the excitement of the traders, conjures up a theatricality that Norris exploits to full effect. The public and male-dominated scenery of the wheat exchange is juxtaposed with the feminine privacy of domestic life and love. The story closes with a happy, sentimental ending: Love wins over money.

All these features of Naturalism are absent in *Jae Fleischhacker in Chicago*. Above all the 'heart' of the novel has disappeared: The trading floor scenes that give the reader a heightened sense of presence no longer exist. What was it that interested Brecht and Hauptmann in *The Pit* – what was its 'use value'? *The Pit* served them as an abstract model of financial speculation. Through the lens of *The Pit* they explored the speculator's rise and fall, the alliances and adversities among different groups of speculators ('bulls' and 'bears'), the dependence of speculation on public opinion and the press, and the interrelation between business and domestic life (marriage). Simultaneously, and against the thrust of Norris's story, Brecht and Hauptmann emphasize that a world dependent on speculation is a world in which human beings surrender to factors beyond their control. Whereas Jadwin's moves on the market follow his ingenious intuitions, *Fleischhacker* is driven by something unpredictable: the weather. The representation of trading is infused with an extensive weather dramaturgy. Moreover, Brecht and Hauptmann's rewriting of the relationship between business and love constitutes a direct negation of Norris's account. Jadwin's obsession with speculation leads him to squander his wife Laura's fortune, yet she forgives him. *Fleischhacker* destroys such sentiment. Nothing is exempt from economic logic. Jae's wife Annabel abandons her husband, once his downfall is clear, so that she can save her fortune.

What stands out in Brecht and Hauptmann's reconfiguration is the absence of any sense of narrative direction or coherence. The libidinous flow that propels Jadwin's infatuation with financial gambling, which also absorbs the reader into the story, has disintegrated into a multitude of scenic splinters. *Jae Fleischhacker in Chicago* thus presents itself as a collection of snapshots, each potentially self-sufficient. Brecht and Hauptmann seem to have embarked on a journey of fragmentation, microscopically accessing selected components of Norris's story, enlarging them, pushing their underlying logic to the fore, re-accentuating them if necessary, as if the truth behind the speculation process could be found in that condensed, single moment. They apply this strategy against plot construction most radically in the representation of cornering the wheat market, which is never dramatized, but only mentioned in the form of sparse summaries and newspaper reports.

The overall collection of scene sketches still adds up to the portrait of a trader, but this is a refracted image that allows no empathetic complicity; it no longer invites the viewer to identify with his motivations or to sympathize with him on his journey towards downfall. The logic can perhaps best be described as cinematographic, producing close-ups, jump cuts, and freeze frames. When Brecht turns to the achievements of film in the *Threepenny Trial* (1932), he observes that the medium of film focuses on *Haltungen* (stances) in situations, making us see the protagonists from the outside (*Brecht on Film and Radio*, 162), a description that captures well what had become of *The Pit*.

While the most dramatic core of the novel – the cornering of the wheat market – remains undramatized in *Fleischhacker*, many scenes are set at the beginning or end of the corner scheme, once its failure has become obvious. A sense of downfall and catastrophe permeates most of them – the spectator looks back at the events from the perspective of their ending, either through Fleischhacker's own melancholic reflections or prompted by an unidentified narrator: 'When you read in the records of your annals / About J. Fleischhacker's instructive downfall / Know this, a bit of late rain was the reason' (B30). In 1929, Brecht would define this technique as historicizing. By shifting current events into a historical context, the former are made to appear anachronistic and open to question: A sense of distance is introduced.

Such a detached stance is supported linguistically, for instance through a reporting or biblical style of narrative: 'But when they came to the threshold of his house and called: come out, Jae, come out, Jae came out and asked them: what is it you want? They said: return our money, for you have deceived us' (A17). However, the majority of the dramatic scenes are composed in a jagged-sounding, broken iambic verse that pivots around a

classic Shakespearean iambic pentameter but then consistently breaks the rhythm's regularity. The effect is that of a jazz version of classical blank verse.

In sum, the stylistic experiments that Brecht and Hauptmann conducted in the course of *Fleischhacker* eventually came to be subsumed under the heading of epic drama.

### ***A Family from the Savannah: Completion through combining?***

The relentless pursuit of fragmentation must have raised some concern: How could the disparate pieces be assembled into a finished play? In a 1926 diary note Hauptmann writes with relief: 'Idea: put together *Fleischhacker* and hurricane piece!!! Seems to be the solution'; and a few days later, 'lucky idea: Joe is the brother in the city whom the family is looking for ... because of Calvin and Joe the family is ruined' (*BFA* 10.1, 1071). By 'hurricane piece' she meant *A Family from the Savannah*, a separate play they had been developing which borrowed from Norris's *Octopus* the motifs of the farming family's move to the city, starvation, and prostitution of the daughter.

How did *Savannah* present a potential solution to the endless fraying of *Fleischhacker*? Both plays are set in Chicago, offering the same diagnosis: misguided appetites, entrepreneurial ambition, and a trajectory leading to downfall and catastrophe. Moreover, *Savannah* may have offered to the shambles of *Fleischhacker* a clearer episodic sequence in which the latter could be embedded. By combining the two, Brecht must have hoped to turn *Fleischhacker* into a 'real story' of family drama, with the theme of the lost son and brotherly rivalry providing proper dramatic conflict and structure.

However, the combination plan went no further than two plot-lines and a few scene sketches. These indicate how Brecht and Hauptmann tried to combine the two projects. The first outline suggests a classical five-act drama, each act divided into three scenes. The two narratives are causally interwoven (A9, A11). The second outline (A12) removes these causal links and replaces them with a loosely configured montage of eleven tableaux alternating between *Fleischhacker* and *Savannah*. Yet *Fleischhacker*'s temporal logic, which mainly explores beginnings and endings, resisted *Savannah*'s linear structure, which proceeded step by step. Moreover, *Savannah*, with its many direct addresses and choral pieces, is audience-conscious and confrontational, while *Fleischhacker*, with its emphasis on epic retrospection, provides no such direct points of contact. Finally, *Fleischhacker*'s focus on the wheat economy diverged from *Savannah*'s main interest in the city as battlefield.

In comparison, one can see why Griffith's pioneering use of montage in his cinematographic adaptation of Norris was so successful. *A Corner in Wheat* juxtaposes farming, bakery, and speculation scenes with no causal links. The economic correlation between production, speculation, and consumption holds all the strands together.

### ***Fleischhacker and Marxism***

'I got the impression that these processes [futures trading] were simply inexplicable, that is, they were beyond the grasp of reason, that is, they simply were irrational ... I began reading Marx, and it was only then that I read Marx', Brecht stated in 1935 with reference to *Fleischhacker*. What exactly was 'inexplicable' and how could Marx have offered a remedy?

Futures trading is not difficult to comprehend, and Brecht evidently had the capacity to do so. Traders agree to buy or sell a commodity, such as grain, at a particular price at a particular time in the future, and seek to gain through price fluctuation. In other words, they 'bet' on the price a commodity might achieve at a set date in the future, taking into account all available information on the factors that influence price development: harvest prospects, export-import taxes, political conflicts, and so on. That information can, of course, be subject to manipulation: For example, strategic purchases or sales can influence a commodity's price; or a commodity can be secretly hoarded in order to control supply and price. These fundamental elements of the process of futures trading are not, therefore, 'inexplicable'; rather, it is the very fact that grain is distributed through speculation that is 'beyond the grasp of reason'.

Futures trading in wheat, as Brecht and Hauptmann phrase it in *Fleischhacker*, institutionalizes 'human scheming against the bread of humanity' (B45). The 'irrational' element in trading is that it becomes an abstract ritual divorced from the human, existential need for nourishment. Thus, explaining how speculation works by simply telling its story says nothing about its *raison d'être*; on the contrary, it naturalizes its practice. In fact, as Brecht declared in 1926 with critical reference to Thomas Mann's model of the realist novel, *not* understanding might be our only chance (BFA 21, 167). It is, then, society's irrational rationality that Brecht and Hauptmann aimed to expose through their reconfiguration of Norris's novel, persistently undermining its Naturalist thrust, moving away from a form of literary critique that promises insight through a naive, mimetic realism.

Yet such intentions encountered an inevitable obstacle: Brecht and Hauptmann's perspective remained limited by Norris's angle on financial

speculation. Even though they disrupt the narrative's flow, the majority of scenes in *Fleischhacker* are still conceived from the speculator's point of view and buy into Norris's sensationalism: The dramatic event of a corner does not represent the normal workings of the market. Corners are exceptions and their effects short-lived. Finally, the focus on futures trading alone could not provide an adequate account of capitalism as it should be considered in relation to the spheres of production, consumption, and distribution.

It seems Brecht and Hauptmann were aware of these constraints in their source material. Their decision to combine *Jae Fleischhacker in Chicago* with *A Family from the Savannah* may have been not only an attempt to contain fragmentation, but also to situate the trader within a more complex interplay of social forces. It allowed them to juxtapose the entrepreneurial speculator with the enterprising farming family, the thirst for money driving them all. However, although this decision helped to overcome the one-dimensional perspective of the speculator, it reinforced the idea that money and finance are the cause of society's misery. As Herwig Seliger points out, Brecht and Hauptmann's combination of the two plots sacrifices any distinction between social classes: Money ruins everyone.<sup>2</sup> Their burgeoning critique of capitalism thus comes to share with their American literary sources a general distrust of finance, money, and the 'abstract'.

After reading Marx, Brecht did indeed attempt a fresh start on the topic. Marx equipped him with an understanding of the different socio-economic spheres and their interaction. *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* (1932) attempted to stage capitalist economy in its entirety as it moves through various cycles of crisis. Futures trading is contextualized in relation to production, distribution, and consumption. Investors, factory owners, merchants, and workers represent the different economic spheres. However, this new Marxist dramaturgy was not entirely unproblematic either. It risked, as Adorno saw very clearly, compromising the constitutive openness of art in favour of politics:<sup>3</sup> Brecht on the one hand aimed at a faithful depiction of the workings of capitalism, but on the other wanted to refrain from forcing a political message on the viewer.

### ***Fleischhacker*: A failed experiment?**

No play entitled *Fleischhacker* was ever completed. In late 1929, comparing *In the Jungle of Cities* to *Fleischhacker*, Brecht concluded that the former had represented an excess of intellectual freedom vis-à-vis reality, whereas in the latter 'the irreconcilable dualism between idea + reality ... led to the utter destruction of the project'.<sup>4</sup> His remark alludes to Marx's dialectic of

consciousness and being: the reciprocal effects between the thinking self and material reality. *In the Jungle of Cities* was still unconcerned with that dialectic. The thinking subject and its desire to shape reality drive the play, dictating a more obvious dramatic structure. With *Fleischhacker* Brecht and Hauptmann aimed at making individual action contingent on material conditions. But as shown earlier, the perspective adopted from Norris proved insufficient.

Another obstacle to the completion of *Fleischhacker* might have been a dramaturgical one, relating to their method of fragmentation. Hauptmann and Brecht found themselves in the same position as the epic actor. Their challenge was to create a sequence of events from a collection of snapshots, ‘despite, or better, by means of jumps and ruptures’ (*BFA* 24, 49). They had to create such a plot anew, after purposefully having dismantled Norris’s narrative. Here a conflict arises between, on the one hand, aesthetic modes of production striving for fragmentation, and, on the other, a respect for classical dramatic conventions. In other words, their working methodology was perhaps more radical than their expectation as to what represented a producible play.

Certainly, other reasons can be found for the project’s state of incompletion, but it may be more useful to interrogate the notion of failure itself. Perhaps there was no failure, but only ongoing production. The *Fleischhacker* experimentation led to the 1926 poem ‘This Babylonian confusion of the words’:

Recently I wished  
 To intrigue you with the story  
 Of a wheat dealer in the city  
 Of Chicago, in the midst of my speech  
 My voice fled me

(*BFA* 13, 356–7)

In 1935 *Fleischhacker* provides the material for another poem:

When years ago studying the workings of the Chicago wheat market  
 I suddenly understood how they manage the world’s cereal there  
 And at the same time did not understand it and laid the book down  
 I knew immediately: you have got yourself into  
 An evil business.

(*BFA* 14, 296)<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, Brecht rewrites the *Fleischhacker* material into no less than three film treatments: ‘The Story of Two Brothers’ (1929), ‘The Hamlet

of the Wheat Exchange' (1940) and together with Ferdinand Reyher 'The Bread-King' (1941).

Both *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (1941) and the famous subway scene in the film *Kuhle Wampe* (1932) revolve around the topic of commodity speculation (cauliflower and coffee beans respectively), and *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* extensively reuses *Fleischhacker's* material. The *Fleischhacker* fragment also embodies a transitional moment in the rebalancing of the topics of economy and city. The subsequent plays *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (1930) and *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* achieve in this respect a reconciliation that Brecht searched for but never accomplished in *Fleischhacker*.

Ultimately, we have to ask if *Fleischhacker* could have triggered such wide-ranging productivity if it had been completed. Brecht himself was well aware of this and pointed to the project as a thematic complex in which he was exploring a new dramaturgy that simultaneously staged and critiqued capitalism. By stalling completion, *Fleischhacker* opened up a field of experimentation from which emerged – for better or worse – a new Marxist Brecht along with the conception of epic drama.

### Structure of this *Fleischhacker* version

While the *Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe* (BFA) has organized the individual texts according to a chronology of three different work phases, thus interweaving *Jae Fleischhacker in Chicago* and *A Family from the Savannah*, we separated the plays into two main sections, with a third, shorter section containing the pieces that clearly demonstrate a combination plan. Within each complex, we have attempted to trace a rudimentary dramaturgical structure that brings out thematic connections through which we hope to make the fragmented material more accessible. *Jae Fleischhacker in Chicago* is organized in a two-part layout, taking into account that the majority of scenes focus on either beginnings or endings. *A Family from the Savannah* is structured in a more linear fashion, following in loose clusters the family's journey from their arrival in Chicago to their ruin.

As we have shown, *Fleischhacker* is characterized by a high level of fragmentation. We have therefore been cautious not to give the false impression that the textual material constitutes a finished play that could be performed without further intervention. Rather, our version aims to provide an insight into *Fleischhacker's* work-in-progress character, tracing Brecht's ongoing search for formal solutions. The characteristics of the fragment are for example present in the lack of assigned characters as well

as finalized names or titles. Fleischhacker's first name 'Jae' is a case in point. Brecht derives it from *The Pit's* main protagonist's nickname 'J.', the first letter of his surname 'Jadwin'. Brecht transposes the English pronunciation into German: 'Jay' becomes 'Jae' (phonetically 'jæ'). But this version exists in parallel to 'Joe'. Furthermore, Brecht and Hauptmann often did not allocate a named character to the dramatic speeches they wrote. Only where these 'anonymous' speeches can clearly be assigned to Fleischhacker have we inserted his name in square brackets, but there are many other scenes where speakers are left open in accordance with the manuscripts.

In order to prevent the misleading sense of a finished play, other style conventions normally applied in drama have been avoided. For example, we did not provide a list of characters at the very beginning, as this would require a worked-out plot supported by those characters. Finally, we have not cut or reinvented wordings in the translation where the German original is difficult to understand, allowing glimpses into the rich experimentalism that marked Brecht's work on *Fleischhacker*.

PHOEBE VON HELD AND  
MATTHIAS ROTHE

## Notes

- 1 Bernhard Reich, *Im Wettlauf mit der Zeit: Erinnerungen aus fünf Jahrzehnten deutscher Theatergeschichte* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1970), 287.
- 2 Helfried W. Seliger, *Das Amerikabild Bertolt Brechts* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1974), 124.
- 3 Theodor W. Adorno, 'On Commitment', *Performing Arts Journal* 3.2 (1978), 9.
- 4 Bertolt Brecht, *Notizbücher 24 und 25, 1927–30*, ed. Peter Villwock (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2010), 260.
- 5 These two poems are quoted according to the new versions in Bertolt Brecht, *Collected Poems*, translated and edited by Tom Kuhn and David Constantine (New York and London: Liveright/W. W. Norton, 2018).

## Part One: *Jae Fleischhacker in Chicago*

[A17]

On Fleischhacker and other histories

1)

First present all the material like in the bible

(But when they came to the threshold of his house and called: come out, Jae, come out, Jae came out and asked them: what is it you want? They said: return our money, for you have deceived us. Etc.)

2)

Then as a newspaper report

3)

Table with technical terms

Expensive

Cheap

[B32]

The one whose name escapes me now tell me of him

Chicago he calls jungle, tigers us, and himself  
Master of the Tigers

So from this day watch every card

He does not play

The sickness in my body, now

For seventeen years, is keeping me away from business

[A5]

Nathanael Fisk, the cork. Bloated, unhealthy, liver disease, shining blue eyes. Always dressed in white. Stock market expertise. Engineer. Took part in five corners, but never a corner himself

Exits when Joe enters. Reappears after the tiger has scoffed his first breakfast and proved himself to be a genius. Joe tries to get Fisk's opinion out of him. Fisk has his liver to deal with, dies. Death notice at stock exchange. Fisk shares fall through the floor. Joe goes for it again. But Fisk has secured himself right and left. The corpse pockets everything

Fisk leaves Joe the woman, whom he had brought to Fisk in her prime.  
 Woman leaves Joe before crash

**Joe** Even if you have to open his mouth with a crowbar

**Clerk** His mouth is wide open, yet nothing comes out but foul breath  
 from a sick liver and bloated body

[A18]

### **Prologue to Jae Fleischhacker**

#### *Money*

Money is something very important. This is widely acknowledged, yet very few people are actually comfortable with this. Even though money brings great honour to the person who owns it, almost all who honour him because he owns it are ashamed. It is not seen as honourable to make much of it. It is seen as best to receive it for efforts held in very low esteem such as those of industriousness or connections or amusing smartness, and it is not even seen as particularly wrong to obtain it without any service in return. For example, many assign little value to women, yet to give a woman away for money is seen as shameful: only women themselves are permitted to do this. It is honourable to lie for your fatherland and it is honourable to own money but it is not honourable to lie for money. That is why all things which revolve around money are little known, and for many things what is unknown about them because it relates to money is much more significant than everything that is known about them. Because of this a wrong impression emerges. Such a wrong impression almost always emerges, for example, in the case of wars.

[A13 end]

### **Purpose of the wheat exchange**

Mitigation of risk. Allocation of world wheat. A fixed price eventually takes its hold on the wheat. The price stands, between the harvests.

In excess of youthfulness

Committing follies

Later, seeing people for what they really are

Morons and rogues

For in the face of growing impoverishment

Life to him seemed dearer by the day

[B18]

1

Standing around him and praising him.

**John Table** What I appreciate about you is your sense of humour

**Fleischhacker** They are like children and need someone to take care of them.

2

Fleischhacker and four bears, amongst them John Table and Archie Brown

**Fleischhacker**

For now Chicago's milk glass face  
Is turned to us, Jae Fleischhacker

4

MEETING WITH THE BIG BEAR

The four are forever asking questions, he is always saying 'no', has trouble keeping them on board

[B16 middle]

**Milk**

We fished the penny, you and I  
Out of the gutter  
You're sending me away, me who  
Drank with you for one long year  
From one cup and ate from  
*One* hand  
For I washed myself *after* you  
In the same bowl.

**[Fleischhacker]**

When you are sorrow-stricken  
Do not let your hair hang  
In the bowl from which we eat with gentlemen  
Eat together

2

**Wheat Exchange**

**Jae Fleischhacker** and four bulls: **Table, Brown, Shaw and Beket;**  
standing apart **Mathew Milk.**

**Jae**

For now the milk glass face of this Chicago  
Is turned to me, Jae Fleischhacker  
I shall obey the wish of the immense Chicago  
At such a height to change  
To gain in virtue and  
Before rising any further, to test myself, how  
Good my health is and thus  
(*Approaches Milk.*)  
I will now hack you, my right hand  
Though useful still today, once indispensable  
My dirty hand from troubled times, today I'll hack you off

**Shaw**

It's more than we expect, Jae

**Brown**

It's good

**Table**

It's dangerously good

**Jae**

It's dangerous to rise. Leave Milk. Your hand  
Though in my service rough for seven years  
It bears the stench from far below. Along with you  
I shrug off the slaughterhouse's brutal blow and go on fighting  
WITH MY HEAD

**Milk**

Fight well, fight desperately well, and do not fall  
Asleep at night, don't eat, don't drink, don't scream  
For, from this day you have just marked  
Chicago's milk glass face will never look  
Away, but it will count

The beat of your heart, the flush and pallor of your cheek and will  
Not turn away, before it hears your scream  
In the tongue that truly is your own, the language of your spleen  
In which you'll cry out for your mother

**Jae** *laughs and pushes him away:*

Now go away. Don't let yourself be  
Caught when we cast our nets

*(Exit Milk.)*

For

Now the best of times commences. The Wheat

[B15]

**Mortimer Fleischhacker**

*A fair few part company with him, the bad ones stay*

**She** For not as many as came here with you will leave with you from here.

**He**

The city grows

Time trickling away. Good that the days no longer need nourishing

[B16 beginning]

1

**[Fleischhacker]**

In this humanated piece of land

Here human stench rises

Twenty floors high and every foot of it

Has a human face.

*(To Mile:)*

Just go and buy some lads

Who put it in the papers

That there is no rain, the wheat

Will die of thirst!

Oil is heavier than water and floats!

Take a chair with you to the dollars! You'll stay there!

2

The Dinner

Have a cigar, Jim!  
Have some wine

**Beket** As long as there is any!

**Fleischhacker** As long as this little town is standing!

Dexter, Flowers and Glancer

First Glancer and Dexter: they come to an agreement.  
Then, unexpectedly, the bulls.

Fleischhacker ‘acts’ like a bear. Glancer laughs – it’s raining.

You do it! It’s a real fiddle to undo your trousers with a  
fencing glove.

[B16 end]

He now does a calculation:

And yet it’s difficult to count such assets  
The brain provides no guarantee

Fleischhacker to Archie Brown:

**Fleischhacker**

You sold meat in Cincinnati? Good!  
I know something about meat!  
One calves make two calf! Isn’t it so?  
You eat it from a tinny thing in which  
Anything in there unfailingly  
Resembles calf!

**Brown**

I do not understand. My trade  
Was honest. What I sold was good

**Fleischhacker**

What I meant was: what you ate! I do like  
Making fun!

Almost like my brother  
In London? To whom we send  
Money.

What for?

So he can tell us if the sun is shining  
In London!

[B29]

**[Fleischhacker]** Nobody knows how much grain there is in the world. Yet just like the poker player, who doesn't look at his cards, but lays them face-down on the table in front of him, only contemplating the faces of his fellow players, I now want to buy as much as possible of the wheat that exists in the world. Not contemplating whether it is possible, I am now going to, whether possible or not, simply do as good a trade in that grain as I am a good man.

[A4]

First Jae's *baisse* speculation. He has sold wheat and needs to get his hands on wheat.

He has advised the four others to buy, so he can sell to them at their high price.

When the rain sets in, promising a good harvest, he cancels the purchases by the four bulls (he makes a gain by speculating on thin air), accepts their wheat at a low price. The price drops. He continues to sell.

The rain persists and there will be little wheat. He needs to buy to cover his sales, and that's why the price goes up.

He needs to get 1000 bushels for each of which he receives 5 Marks. By the time he has his 1000 bushels (panic buying), they have already cost him 8000 Marks, he has an actual loss of 3000 Marks. In order to make up for it, he has to change sides. He needs to continue buying.

He buys another 1000 bushels for the price of 8 Marks, assuming the price would go up to 11 Marks. Then he would break even. Yet because he doesn't just want to break even, but to make a gain, he buys another 5000 bushels. At least to protect himself to some extent, in case the price might

ultimately fall, and especially because it has stopped raining and there is talk again of a good harvest, *he buys actual wheat*.

Suppose: the entire harvest will be 7000 bushels. He owns 5000 bushels. He buys the remaining wheat as standing crop, then those who need to supply him with the 5000 will have to purchase from him the wheat that he actually owns for the price of 20 Marks in order to sell it to him for 8 Marks per bushel. He will be able to release them from their obligation if they pay him 12 Marks per bushel.

But he did not factor in everything, they do not need to buy from him, suddenly wheat is flooding the market.

Realizing a gain by betraying people, he goes bankrupt.

[B40]

1 Jae says to the four bulls: you have to buy grain. We had four good years; this year will be a bad one. As you know there is drought all over the world. Grain will be very precious. You have to buy grain. And it will fetch a high price.

Jae says to his broker: fools will come; they'll want to have grain and they won't look out for either rain or sun, but they'll only listen to what someone tells them, and they'll pay a good price. So you should sell them grain. And sell the grain for me too, as much of it as possible.

2 After some time the drought ends and it rains. The four bulls to Jae: now it is raining. Everybody says there will be a lot of grain. We'll be able to get as much grain as we want, and it will fetch a low price. And on your advice we bought grain. There was also someone driving the price up, so we only got the grain at a high price.

Jae says to the four bulls: try again. If you buy lots of wheat, wheat will become scarce and you will get a good price. My advice is: tomorrow go and buy a whole heap of grain in one go.

And to his broker Jae says: tomorrow wheat will become very expensive. So sell a big heap of it tomorrow at the price it's at tomorrow, and say you will get the wheat at that price in three months' time, because by then there will be plenty of wheat and you will get it cheap then and they will have to pay you a high price for it.

3 Rain is good for the grain, but then it doesn't stop and now it'll be bad for the grain.

[A6]

The god who sends rain, he also makes the sun shine

The rain is for him

He advises his friends to speculate on *baisse* (good harvest), while he speculates on *hausse* (war rumours etc.), and on top of that it rains.

Somewhere there is an acre

[B20 beginning]

### **Fleischhacker/Chicago**

You have come at a bad time  
Yellow hurricane cloudlet

Price increase between 11 and midday  
Every stalk is worth a hat

You dogs, why didn't you buy just now  
When it was cheap and lots, but now it's getting expensive  
It's eleven o'clock and at midday  
There'll be an increase, then every stalk  
Will be worth a hat  
You fools, this evening  
You could stuff the harvest of this continent in a hat  
We will eat nothing  
For dinner tonight

Joe's KO

[A7]

H. Cliffe tries to get in on the corner, is rejected. Rents silos and, as the controller of the silos, confronts Fleischhacker in the 4th act. Finally, he is allowed on board the sinking ship.

To pull off the corner is very difficult

1. To get warehouses
2. To get the money
3. To get the transport

4. To pay the rent
5. To pay the interest
6. To thwart the machinations of the railway
7. To bribe the interfering press

[B19]

**Fleischhacker** Send seven lads to Mike Gross to the top of Lincoln Square, lads with elbows, whose chins run like knives through Melbourn Viaduct's knots of people.

*(Exit one of them.)*

**One of them** Can't you speak to him?

**Fleischhacker** The phone networks have been jammed for the last two minutes. It's the Red River Corn Sell-Out, but three of them are clinging to their tin cans for us like drowning men.

**The one (back)** It's almost eleven. The street strands of the viaduct are so laden with people, they are getting longer. The viaduct's concrete gorge is clogged up with herds of cars, all tangled up. Melbourn Viaduct itself is swamped with people so that its cement jaws are stretching like elastic.

**Fleischhacker** What sort of people did you send?

**The one** Seven steam saws.

**Fleischhacker** Then wait and switch yourselves off like ships' engines so that these minutes won't exhaust us, for, regular and unrushed, the grey general stream carries our business affairs along.  
*(They stand still.)*

**Messenger** Message from Mike Gross. Talks about rumours of the acquisition of the granaries on the Lower Huron by a secret bull.

**Fleischhacker** At this very moment, everyone will know. If Mike Gross doesn't get in there right now, we are sunk.

[B23 end]

**Jae**

It's in the papers that  
A great mind has made its mark  
On the wheat business; the  
Front page knows my face, the lads  
Put it underneath their plate with ground