

<b>Institution:</b> University of Oxford
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 28 Modern Languages and Linguistics
<b>Title of case study:</b> Promoting public reception of the work of Bertolt Brecht
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Dr Kuhn's research has established him since the mid-1990s as one of the world's leading experts on the modernist poet, playwright and cultural commentator Bertolt Brecht. He has worked to increase the public understanding of Brecht's work, to make good translations with reliable commentaries widely available, and to enhance the quality of Brecht theatre productions. Besides his involvement with (non-academic) publishing, he has worked directly with theatres and drama colleges, providing advice and workshops, revising translations, writing programme notes, and improving the quality of performance of Brecht's work. Beneficiaries include theatre audiences, school students, general readers, the publishing industry, the performing arts, and cultural life in general.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Dr Tom Kuhn is a lecturer in German at the University of Oxford and Fellow of St Hugh's College. His main research interests are in political literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Kuhn's long and intensive involvement in Brecht research has won him the respect of the international community of Brecht scholars – with whom he enjoys productive networking relationships – and, crucially, also of the Brecht heirs and publishers (Suhrkamp in Germany, Bloomsbury in the UK, and W.W. Norton in the US).</p> <p>Having started in the 1990s by examining the plays of Brecht's exile period (1933 to 1947) and their political import, Kuhn has gone on to research the young Brecht, Brecht's cultural and political theory, his poetry, and the cultural transmission of his work. His early interest in the plays has issued in important contributions on and editions of <i>Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe</i> and <i>Furcht und Elend des III. Reiches</i> (2001); the further research has generated articles, book chapters and editions, besides the more ephemeral outputs (reviews, theatre programmes, radio work).</p> <p>Kuhn's particular contributions have included a new assessment of the creative relationships around the young Brecht; in doing so has offered an image of the origin of his multifaceted creativity and of a collective approach to composition. This work has been widely referenced, above all the article 'Ja, damals waren wir Dichter'<sup>[1]</sup>. He has made contributions to research into the reception and resonance of Brecht's 'anti-fascist' texts, to important synthetic accounts of Brecht's theoretical writings (the book publication <i>Brecht on Art and Politics</i> (2003)<sup>[2]</sup>, which attempts a new narrative account of Brecht's theoretical writings under these broad headings) and of his poetic output (especially in <i>Empedocles' Shoe</i> and in the <i>Brecht Handbuch</i>, to which Kuhn provided the introduction (both 2002)<sup>[3]</sup>).</p> <p>More recently Kuhn has been working on Brecht's use of visual and pictorial material<sup>[4]</sup>. As well as articles in the <i>Brecht Yearbook</i> and elsewhere (2006-12), it is intended that this latest work will issue in a book-length publication. Kuhn has been researching Brecht's collective work practices in and around the theatre as well as the relationship between his theoretical writings and work for the theatre.<sup>[5][6]</sup> The work on <i>Brecht on Art and Politics</i> is being developed in two further volumes of Brecht's theory (with Kuhn as lead editor): a totally revised <i>Brecht on Theatre</i> and a new <i>Brecht on Performance</i> (to be published in 2014).</p> <p>A new project on translation and cultural transmission, funded by the AHRC (see below), provides historical and critical reflection precisely on issues of the mediation and 'impact' of Brecht's work. This project – which was influenced by an earlier article ('Brecht and Willett: Getting the gest', 2003<sup>[7]</sup>) – both grows out of and will feed back into the translation and editorial work.</p>
<p><b>3. References to the research</b></p> <p>[1] "Ja, damals waren wir Dichter". Hanns Otto Münsterer, Bertolt Brecht und die Dynamik literarischer Freundschaft'in <i>Der junge Brecht. Aspekte seines Denkens und Schaffens</i>, ed. Helmut Gier and Jürgen Hillesheim (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann 1996), pp. 44-64;</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

Available on request.

- [2] *Brecht on Art and Politics*, edited and translated with Steve Giles and others (London: Methuen 2003), x and 344pp; Available on request.
- [3] 'Brecht als Lyriker', introduction to *Brecht-Handbuch: Gedichte*, ed. Jan Knopf (Stuttgart: Metzler 2002), pp.1-21; and an English version as pp. 5-36 of *Empedocles' Shoe: Essays on Brecht's Poetry*, ed. Tom Kuhn and Karen Leeder (London: Methuen 2002), xi and 308pp; Available on request.
- [4] 'Poetry and Photography: Mastering Reality in the *Kriegsfiabel* in *Bertolt Brecht: A Reassessment of his Work and Legacy*, ed. Robert Gillett and Godela Weiss-Sussex (Amsterdam: Rodopi 2008), pp. 169-189; Available on request.
- [5] 'Das Epische und das Nomadische: das Bildmaterial zum *Kaukasischen Kreidekreis*' in *Bild und Bildkünste bei Brecht* [Brecht-Tage 2010], ed. Christian Hippe (Berlin: Matthes und Seitz 2011), pp. 99-124; Available on request.
- [6] 'Brecht reads Bruegel: *Verfremdung*, gestic realism and the second phase of Brechtian theory', *Monatshefte*, vol.105, no.1 (2013), pp. 101-122. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/mon.2013.0022>
- [7] 'Brecht and Willett: Getting the gest' in *The Brecht Yearbook* 28, ed. Stephen Brockmann (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press 2003), pp. 261-273; <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/German/German-idx?type=article&did=German.BrechtYearbook028.i0021&id=German.BrechtYearbook028&isize=M>

Many of Kuhn's publications were the result of commissions or invitations, and were subject to peer review. Several have been translated into other languages. 'Brecht als Lyriker' exists, for example, in closely related versions, in both English and Greek as well as German. All of the above were submitted to the relevant RAE or REF exercises.

Kuhn's research on Brecht has been generously supported by the AHRB (now AHRC), the British Academy and the Leverhulme Trust (respectively for *Brecht on Art and Politics*: £11,785 in 2002, for cataloguing the Willett archive: £2,560 in 2003 and for 'Brecht and the pictorial': £29,544 in 2008-10 – amongst the most recent grants). A major five-year project ('Brecht into English', April 2013-2018) is supported by the AHRC with a grant of £420,128.

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The first generation of translations and editions of Brecht's work was notoriously chaotic and sometimes simply low-quality. Kuhn's work, intended to address this unevenness, has educational, commercial and general cultural impact, felt above all in schools, theatres and the book trade. Besides translating and editing important texts himself, Kuhn has worked closely with other translators, has engaged with schools and theatres, and has led and participated in theatre workshops with the Young Vic and others. Above all, since 2002 he has been the sole general editor of the 'Methuen Drama' Brecht list, commissioning and approving new titles and translations and initiating new publications of every variety.

#### Improving the quality of translation and increasing accessibility of Brecht publications

The mediation of Brecht's work through reliable translations, both in book form and in the theatre, makes a crucial contribution to the cultural life of the English-speaking world. Brecht's plays have become a cornerstone of the Methuen Drama list, now published by Bloomsbury. Methuen Drama publish books for theatre-goers, students, scholars, practitioners, actors and those wishing to pursue a career in the theatre industry. The editorial and publishing team relies heavily on Kuhn's expertise in reaching publishing decisions about Brecht translations. Kuhn coordinates and oversees the whole Brecht programme, doing hands-on editing for many volumes. He also provides guidance which significantly influences the publication choices of the German publisher, Suhrkamp, and the Brecht Estate. 'His role and expertise is unusually significant: we work closely with the Brecht Estate on all new titles under consideration. Tom Kuhn produces a reader report on every new play translation that we are sent with a view to publishing it to coincide with a theatre production. This report is not only considered by ourselves as Brecht's English publisher, it is sent also to the Brecht Estate who consider it when making their decision whether to licence the

## Impact case study (REF3b)

publication or not.' The commissioning editor also states 'His wide connections among Brecht scholars have assisted our publishing programme by his soliciting proposals from suitably qualified authors.'<sup>[1]</sup>

Methuen Drama currently has forty nine Brecht titles in print. Twenty-three titles have been published while Tom Kuhn has officially been Methuen Drama's Brecht General Editor, with an additional three titles for which he was co-editor. [text removed for publication].<sup>[1]</sup>

### International access to Brecht through English-language texts

The impact of Kuhn's research extends far beyond the UK. According to the publisher, these books are also widely distributed overseas. Bloomsbury markets many of its titles directly in the USA and in other countries internationally. The share of the North American market is expanding quickly thanks to an agreement between Suhrkamp, the heirs, and Bloomsbury, achieved through Kuhn's mediation. The largest English-language market, after North America, is Australia and New Zealand, but English is also the vehicular language by which publics in the Indian sub-continent, Asia (e.g. Singapore) and other regions worldwide gain access to Brecht.<sup>[1]</sup>

### Enabling the teaching of Brecht's life, politics and theatre theory

Since Brecht is among the few classic and widely studied authors who engage directly with economic and political questions, the availability of the Methuen editions for educational purposes helps to nurture a politically literate public. Kuhn has had an immediate educational impact through the Student Editions, which are widely used in schools, both in Britain and elsewhere, and contain an essay on Brecht's life, politics and theatre theory by Kuhn which is already becoming one of the standard introductions to Brecht. [text removed for publication]

The Methuen Drama titles feature in the Bloomsbury Drama Online Library<sup>[i]</sup> launched in 2012, hence are readily accessible for educational purposes. Both student editions appear online.

In 2013 Kuhn gave educational talks in connection with the RSC *Galileo* production primarily for students of physics; and on 17 June there was a 'Poet in the City' event at the King's Place, London, led by Kuhn and David Constantine, devoted to Brecht's poetry, song and its translation into English (which attracted an audience of some 250 – schoolchildren, actors, scholars, directors, as well as members of the general public)<sup>[ii]</sup>. This and similar programmes will visit several other cities (and literary festivals) in the coming years. Such wider educational and cultural engagement is typical, and a cultural programme and outreach is an important feature of the AHRC-funded project 'Brecht into English'.

Translations of Brecht plays edited by Kuhn have been used by others for educational purposes. *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* tr. Willett has been toured around schools by Scene Productions a number of times since 2008<sup>[2]</sup> 'offering students and adults the chance to re-discover theatre in fresh, bold and imaginative ways.' According to feedback from teachers: 'Brecht is no longer feared by my students.'; 'Excellent. You engaged the students with both a difficult text and techniques which are often hard for them to grasp. Well done and thank you.'<sup>[iii]</sup>

### Providing new impulses for the staging of Brecht's works

Brecht is an important figure in theatre repertoire, with over 30 professional<sup>[2]</sup> and many more amateur productions<sup>[3]</sup> in the UK alone in the relevant period. Twelve professional productions featured translations made and edited by Kuhn at theatres around the UK<sup>[2]</sup>. Major UK and international productions were:

- *Mother Courage* tr. Kushner, in New York (originally 2006, dir. George C. Wolfe, featured in John Walter's film *Theatre of War* 2008, and reprised Oct 2009) and at the **National Theatre** (Sept 2009, dir. Deborah Warner);
- *The Good Soul of Szechuan* tr. Harrower, at the **Young Vic** (May 2008, dir. Richard Jones);
- *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* tr. McGuinness (Courtyard Theatre (2008) Fluellen Theatre (2010) and Bruiser Theatre Co (2011)); and tr. Beaton (2009 by Shared Experience at the Nottingham Playhouse, dir. Nancy Meckler);
- *A Life of Galileo* tr. Ravenhill, at the **RSC Stratford** (February 2013, dir. Roxana Silbert).

Though it is hard to estimate total audience figures for these productions, some examples can be

given: the National Theatre calculated that 61,000 people saw the production of *Mother Courage* over 61 performances, playing to 90% of box office capacity [4]; the Liverpool Playhouse and Nottingham Playhouse audience figures were over 15,000 for a production of *Arturo Ui* in which Kuhn was directly involved, of which 1 in 10 tickets went to school groups from 48 schools. All of these were widely reviewed in the national and regional press e.g. the Liverpool Playhouse production was reviewed in *The Times* 06/10/11, *The Stage* 5/10/11, *The Guardian* 7/10/11, *The Observer* 9/10/11, and *The Independent* 10/10/11.[iv]

#### **Informing improved performance and staging practices of Brecht's work**

Kuhn's work on the texts 'on performance' (esp. the *Messingkauf*) is helping to inform new approaches to the training of actors and to rehearsal work. His work on Brecht's visual imagination is suggesting new ways of presenting the plays as not only dramatic but also visual spectacles. In connection with his research on *Brecht on Performance*, Kuhn collaborated with the director and theatre teacher Di Trevis in holding a series of actors' workshops at the Giles Foreman Centre for Acting, London in January 2013. A protocol of these and an essay on the use of Brecht's theory in modern theatre practice were written and will feature in the book, and a film will be appended (via weblink) to the publication enabling others to replicate the workshops, training further actors.[5]

Kuhn has often worked closely with translators (Constantine, Kushner, Bremner), with theatres (recently especially the Young Vic and Liverpool Playhouse) and with directors (Josh Machamer, Di Trevis, Walter Meierjohann) in a form of national and international knowledge exchange. He has often provided advice, historical and textual expertise, and furnished programme notes and articles for theatres, lately for The Young Vic (*The Good Soul of Szechuan*, May 2008) and for the Liverpool Playhouse (*Arturo Ui*, October 2011).

Kuhn's work in Brecht studies is leading to a fuller understanding of Brecht and is shaping the whole reception of this crucial poet, dramatist and cultural commentator across the English-speaking world.

#### **5. Sources to corroborate impact**

##### Testimonial evidence

- [1] Email statement from Senior Commissioning Editor, Methuen Drama, Bloomsbury Publishing
- [2] Email statement and reports from Literary Agent, Alan Brodie Representation
- [3] Email statement from Royalty Accounts Supervisor, Samuel French Ltd
- [4] Email statement and press cuttings for Head of Press, The Royal National Theatre
- [5] Testimonial available from theatre director and teacher

##### Other sources of corroboration

- [i] Evidence of Brecht titles availability on Bloomsbury Drama Online Library  
<http://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/playwrights/bertolt-brecht-iid-12335>
- [ii] Information about the Poet in the City event <http://www.poetinthecity.co.uk/events/158>
- [iii] Teachers feedback on the Scene Productions schools tour  
<http://sceneproductions.co.uk/productions/testimonial-category/fear-and-misery-of-the-third-reich/>
- [iv] National Theatre and Liverpool Playhouse press cuttings available on request