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Paolo Chiarini and the Italian Institute of German Studies

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This issue of the journal is dedicated to the memory of Paolo Chiarini, Director of the Italian Institute of German Studies from 1968 to 2006 and after its transformation into a public research entity, its Vice President until 2011. Chiarini directed the Institute over the course of more than four decades with scientific rigor and a great capacity for planning and organization, and was a vast cultural force who left a profound mark on the field of Italian and international German Studies. In 1968, a caesura by now considered historical on many fronts, Chiarini succeeded Bonaventura Tecchi, a person he had recognized in writing for his “magisterial dedication within literature and for literature” and who in 1963 had brought the Journal of German Studies “*Studi Germanici*” back to life, an action among his greatest achievements while directing of the Institute. Chiarini took up his position with passion and intellectual conviction, developing the programmatic lines previously established by the journal’s founder and first director Giuseppe Gabetti. With Tecchi’s death in May of 1968, the year in which two volumes of the *Repertorio bibliografico della letteratura tedesca in Italia (1900-1965)* – encouraged by Tecchi and realized by Luciano Zagari – were published, Chiarini initiated a change within the field of German Studies by giving particular attention to the progressive tradition of German literature, to the historical avant-garde, to the current of Expressionism, and to mass society’s new forms of communication. An extremely rich and varied literary and cultural panorama corresponds to the strong political, social, and idealistic tensions that connote the 1960s and 1970s, a panorama that Chiarini, German scholar and militant intellectual, read and contributed to being read by new generations through his marriage of strict philological attention, textual analysis, and critical-interpretive depth in a historiographic and dialectic vision that was never pre-conceived. The critical recovery of the avantgarde of the early 20th century and the works of Brecht are contained precisely within this methodological structure and in the strict



combination of text and context. For this reason we are honored to reprint Chiarini's essay *Quattro variazioni brechtiane* (*Four Brechtian variations*) which first appeared in "Studi Germanici" in 1971. Between 1959 and 1970 Chiarini published four books on Brecht, among them the first monograph in Italy (Laterza, 1959) and the important volume *Brecht, Lukács e il realismo* (Laterza 1970, 1983).

The essay here reprinted is the enlargement of an article originally entitled *Bertolt Brecht dal teatro epico al teatro dialettico* which had been published ten years earlier in *Quaderni del Piccolo Teatro*. It is divided into four parts, called "variations", that clearly and succinctly define the foundations of Brechtian dramaturgical aesthetics; at the same time it gathers together those innovative aspects that often stood in contrast to the canonical critical positions which had by then been consolidated. Therefore in the first paragraph *Oltre l'espressionismo* (*Beyond expressionism*) Chiarini identifies "the first direct and explicit document, the 'incunabula' in other words, of that 'epic theatre' which only in 1930 would find a provisional and hasty general systemization" in *Im Dickicht der Städte*, traditionally considered part of Brecht's expressionist period. In the second "variation" Chiarini's definition and categorization of "alienation" – which in its finality of "always presenting the play as if it were a conscious fiction" is identified in the aspects of the theatrical staging – is still exemplary today. He is one of the few who in those years revealed and underlined the co-presence and equal status in Brechtian dramaturgy of *ratio* and of emotion for "the alienation effect does not function under the form of an absence of emotions, but rather under the form of emotions that do not need to be those of the character represented". The third paragraph, dedicated to the complex Brechtian reception of Stanislavski's theatrical praxis, is rich in ideas and new interpretive perspectives while in the fourth Chiarini, taking up an original and nonconformist position, argues the actuality of the didactic plays from a semiological approach that explains the Brechtian foundation of "anti-naturalism". His attempt to free the *Lehrstücke* from simple and predictable propagandistic finality and to contextualize them according to structural choices like the "first exploration of theatre's new frontiers in the age of revolutions and



‘class war’” is also admirable. This contribution of Chiarini’s is a valid and topical incentive to reflect upon and discuss established categories of artistic activity which, going beyond Brecht’s oeuvre, include the always problematic and creative relationship between “the unique timeliness of contestation”, that is, the “strict human and practical mission” of the artist, and his projection into utopia.