Since Brecht's attitudes toward capitalism remained constant from *St. Joan* (i.e., from the depression) to his death, his attitudes toward America also remained constant, because he was no longer interested in the American myth but only in America as an example of capitalism. Therefore, we will end this study with a very cursory look at aspects of Brecht's later interest in America, without considering his two trips to the United States in 1935–36 and 1941–47. His experiences in this country, their transformation into art, and the influence he left in America are not properly part of a study of the symbolic structure that he created to explain contemporary history and economics in his own country. The poems he wrote in Hollywood about Hollywood are irrelevant to that function of the American myth.

The two dramatic works set in America that Brecht wrote in exile are relevant, but they represent no change. The first one, the ballet *Seven Deadly Sins of the Petty Bourgeoisie* (1933), repeats themes of *St. Joan*, *Mahagonny*, *Poor White*, *In the Jungle*, "Song of a Family from the Savannah," and the whole series on migration to the cities. It portrays the "immorality" of being natural in capitalist society; alienation from self, other men and women, and work; and traveling from city to city in the United States. America is, again, simply the capitalist system.

The last American play, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (1941), once more equates Chicago with Berlin. This time the American setting is explicitly an allegory for German events, and Chicago is a caricature of the earlier Chicago myth. The levels of *Verfremdung* in the play make a fascinating study—but the image of America contains little that is new. Al Capone as the specific model is new,
but the gangster world still resembles that in Hauptmann's *Happy End*. Perhaps the most significant difference between the use of America for *Verfremdung* in the early plays and in *Ui* is that the declared purpose of *Ui* is to explain Hitler's rise (i.e., a German phenomenon) to the capitalist (American) audience, by putting it in a familiar (i.e., American = capitalist) setting (*GW* 4:3*). Earlier uses of America were intended to make a familiar situation strange for a German audience; *Ui* intends to make a strange situation familiar to an American audience. This device allows *Ui* to make the point that fascism is a kind of capitalism; as in *St. Joan*, the American situation is in a way the cause of the German situation. (*Ui* in fact begins with the depression.) Both *St. Joan* and *Ui* also parody Shakespearean verse and the German classics.

Brecht did, of course, still read American literature; occasionally details from it are reflected in his writing. In 1935 he wrote the poem "Dismantling of the Ship Oskawa by the Crew," which, enclosed in quotation marks, is practically a literal translation of a passage in Louis Adamic's *Dynamite: The Story of Class Violence in America* (Brecht collected the relevant pages 386–89 with his many notes and clippings [BBA 1371]). This is one of those poems—like "Coals for Mike" (1926), which is placed just before it in the *Svendborg Poems* and also lifted from an American book—that shows Brecht knew there were friendly and progressive forces among the workers in the United States.

In 1936 Brecht wrote another poem, similar in mood to "Coals for Mike" and "Oskawa," that expresses admiration for the solidarity of the black May Day demonstrator Bill Wood, who helped carry a poster reading "Protect Soviet China!" ("Schützt Sowjetchina!"). The concrete details of "May Day Cantata" suggest that it was inspired by a written account of the 1935 May Day demonstration in New York.

But far from invalidating the judgment that the American capitalist system is inhuman, these anecdotes and individual impressions of America reinforced Brecht's judgment about the system as a whole. Workers perform sabotage on their ship or steal coal for a railroad widow precisely as a defense and an act of rebellion against the inhuman system. Like every good socialist, Brecht did not hate the American people or even America, but only its social and economic system. Discovery of positive working-class
individuals could not mitigate his rejection of the system. Americans tend to resent his lack of enthusiasm for the United States. Even socialists seem to feel that he was ungrateful. But Brecht, with his strong grounding in Marxist theory, was clear and consistent in separating the individual from the system, and no amount of friendliness from Americans could make him forget that the United States was the foremost capitalist country of the world and, as such, the enemy. He never wavered in that position, but no one should confuse his ideological consistency with ingratitude to the American people.

Eric Bentley tells the story that when Brecht returned to East Berlin after seven years in the United States, people expected him to tell that he had been miserable there;

“Oh, no, it isn’t like that at all,” he’d say, everything is very, very nice—“it’s just the Capitalists . . . etc.” In short, he didn’t let them believe you see lynchings on every street corner.¹

Brecht’s defense of the positive aspects of America derived largely from the only strong friendship he had with a native American, according to James K. Lyon.² Not only had Ferdinand Reyher urged Brecht to leave Scandinavia as the Nazis got closer and to come to Hollywood; he also intervened for him with authorities and literary and German-exile friends, helped raise money for the really hard-up Brecht family, promoted Brecht’s plays, and translated and adapted Galileo and what he called The Private Life of the Master Race. He managed Brecht’s affairs in the United States after the exile returned home, and sent him American plays for consideration by the Berliner Ensemble. He also collaborated on filmscripts or scenarios with Brecht (notably All Our Yesterdays and The King’s Bread, both set in Chicago). But perhaps most important was the personal view of America that Brecht gained through his friend’s eyes. In Brecht’s diary entry of 13 February 1942, for instance, we can read of Reyher’s attempts to correct Brecht’s negative judgments.³ Reyher taught Brecht about the American labor movement, and Elisabeth Hauptmann told Lyon that in 1946 Brecht intended to write ten forty-minute plays about its historical leaders such as Mother Jones, Mother Bloor, and Eva Pastor. Reyher also took Brecht “prowling” to his favorite haunts in New York, and after his return to Germany Brecht used to write Reyher requesting

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that the American show visiting German friends the Automat and McManus's pub. Brecht made five cross-country trips by car and rail, seeing and digesting much of the country; one such trip took twelve days.

Lyon's study of Brecht's personal relationship with Reyher makes it clear that Brecht had a lively interest in things American while he was here, and even thought of the United States as the country of the common man. Seliger's study of Brecht's stay here emphasizes his anger, his occasional European prejudice against American culture, and his many observations on exploitation and the impossibility of democracy (which he seems to have seen as reduced to an advertising slogan) coexisting with capitalism.

Both reports agree that Brecht differentiated sharply between the American people and their government or economic system. Clearly, the received impression that Brecht simply hated the United States, insulated himself from direct experience of it, and wrote nothing about it while here, must be revised. However, he also came to feel at first hand, while trying to make a living in Hollywood, the way capitalism can ignore and waste people; he was very bitter about his constant financial predicament and the lack of recognition of his work and abilities. Hollywood represented for him the application of capitalist relations of production to the arts, and he was repeatedly shocked and angered by the necessity of selling and promoting oneself there in order to survive. His poems and scenarios written about America while he was here reflect that conflict between a sympathetic view of working-class Americans and a strong condemnation of American commercialism and exploitation.

During his stay in America, Brecht wrote a few more poems on incidents of friendliness toward him or others by individual Americans: "Everywhere Friends," "The Democratic Judge." But apart from a very few "private" American poems, all the rest are bitter condemnations of America, particularly of Hollywood. "Meditating, so I hear, on Hell . . .," "Hollywood," "The Fishing Tackle," "The Volunteer Guards," "Again and Again," "Deliver the Goods," "Hollywood Elegies," all are pithy, angry, sometimes brilliant vignettes exposing the capitalist morality of America.

Nor did the anger soften in his last years; although he almost
never wrote about America after leaving it, the poem "Song of the Rivers" (1954) criticizes American imperialist control of the Amazon, and the article Brecht wrote in 1950 about his HUAC interrogation ("We Nineteen," *GW* 19:490–93) is extremely bitter against America.

Among unfulfilled plans for the last years were a production in the Berliner Ensemble on Joe Hill\(^5\) and a kind of sequel to *Life of Galileo* to be called *Life of Einstein*. There are many notes for the Einstein play,\(^6\) plus an extensive collection of clippings about Einstein (BBA 2064). Brecht also collected material about Oppenheimer (BBA 2064), whom he knew personally from Hollywood;\(^7\) but he chose Einstein to represent the dilemma of the modern physicist, probably partly because Einstein considered himself a socialist and partly because his very name is a symbol of intelligence. A treatment of Brecht's interest in Einstein, the probable concerns of the play, and a list of sources Brecht read can be found in Schumacher's book on *Galileo* and related plays.\(^8\) Part of the point of the projected play was that in 1955 Brecht still considered the United States as dangerous as Nazi Germany: one of Einstein's tragedies is that he fled Germany only to find "Potsdam in Washington."\(^9\)

In the very last year of his life, 1956, Brecht directed one of the Berliner Ensemble's finest productions, *Trumpets and Drums*, which he adapted from Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*. The most significant change from the original is that the English are fighting not a war of equals against the French but a colonial war against the American Revolution. Why did Brecht make this change?

Bernhard Reich describes one of Brecht's many discussions with state officials in the GDR; they were worried that a production of *The Recruiting Officer* would undermine their decision to draft a "people's army":

But Brecht hoped the Berliner Ensemble version exposed both the predatory nature of the intended war and the profitability of the large recruiting business for the ruling class so clearly that it would be taken unambiguously as directed against the militarization of the revenge-hungry Federal Republic.

Brecht hoffte aber, daß die Fassung des Berliner Ensembles sowohl den Raubcharakter des beabsichtigten Kriegs als auch den Privatnutzen des großen Werbegeschäfts für die herrschende Klasse so klar aufdeckt, daß
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America plays the role in this play of the people who are fighting for liberation, while England is the oppressor, and it is England that represents West Germany. This is very important because it demonstrates the fact that it was not America itself that Brecht condemned but its capitalist and imperialist system. At one time America too had been a revolutionary country.

Although he wrote little about America after *Ui*—the Hollywood poems are the main exception—Brecht collected information on it until he died. There are perhaps fifty books about America in his library (not to mention all the detective stories!), most of them printed in the 1950s. Especially frequent topics are black people in the United States and Alger Hiss. There are also clippings from 1956 on C. Wright Mills's book *The Power Elite*, as well as those from 1954 on Oppenheimer and Einstein. The frequency of clippings from the *New York Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *Saturday Review* suggests that he received those publications regularly.11

But that is about all there is, and the writings listed are about all he wrote on America; not very much in the fifteen years since *Ui*, not really very much in the twenty-five years since *St. Joan*. America no longer held a disproportionate position in Brecht's reading or writing. Having been reduced from a myth to the prime example of capitalism, America lost most of its fascination for Brecht. He could no longer feel any positive attraction to a myth that he had discovered to be composed partly of lies and partly of bourgeois ideology.