

History and Drama
Essays in Honour of Bernhard Reitz

Edited by Sigrid Rieuwerts

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- (1) Bernhard Reitz in William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*
(Foto: Dr. Schilla for the Carl-Schurz-Schule, Frankfurt 1965)
- (2) Martin Schupp and Kathrin Scheufler in
Harold Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes*
(Foto: Heiko Stahl for The Day-Old-Theater, Mainz 2006)

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Editorial Note

I still remember the day when I first met Bernhard Reitz. It was my first week as a student of English at the Justus Liebig-Universität Gießen. He and Professor Raimund Borgmeier taught the Introduction to English Literature in parallel courses and my name was on the course list for ‘Dr. Reitz’. The class was scheduled for ‘11 c.t.’ and at 11.00 I found myself waiting in a room over-crowded with first-semester students but with no lecturer in sight. 11 o’clock had passed and gone, 11.05 . . . 11.10 . . . and just when I thought of leaving, the door opened . . . and there he was: immaculately dressed in a dark suit and a blue stripy Oxford shirt and tie, welcoming us with a smile and lots of good wishes for our future studies. He looked like ‘The Professor’ and I thought I had gone to Raimund Borgmeier’s class by mistake. At first I was uneasy, but then I loved the way he made us read and contextualize and decided to stay in the ‘wrong’ class, which after much confusion on my part, turned out to be the right one after all. Bernhard Reitz – the gentleman, that is and has always been one of the most enduring images of him, the professor.

To present Bernhard Reitz with a *Festschrift* on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday is a great pleasure and honour to me and everyone on the Tabula Gratulatoria. First and foremost, I would like to thank the authors – his friends and colleagues worldwide – for contributing fascinating and original articles on history and drama. Without their work and commitment, this publication would not have come about. Although I took the initiative with the *Festschrift*, others have helped me on the way, in particular, Tommy Allan, Patrick Gill and Jonathan Westwood and above all, Martin Schupp. My thanks also go to Heiko Stahl and Heidi and Laura Reitz for providing photos; Wolfgang Lippke, Martin Middeke and Heiner Zimmermann for advice and support; and to my husband Hans Rieuwerts for taking on this project as his own during my Fellowship and time abroad. I am especially grateful to Erwin Otto from the WVT and to Ingrid and Raimund Borgmeier for their friendship and support – their unfailing commitment to this *Festschrift* was greatly appreciated.

What distinguishes this volume from any other publication of its kind is the number of original contributions for Bernhard Reitz from highly acclaimed British authors and playwrights. My heartfelt thanks go to Howard Barker for writing the “Twelve Propositions Already in Decay” especially for this volume, to Michelene Wandor for sharing some memories of Bernhard Reitz in “History/Herstory” and to Julia Pascal for contributing “The London Patriots”, published here for the first time – in honour of Bernhard Reitz. Without these contributions, *History and Drama* would not have become what it undoubtedly is: an important contribution to the fields in which Bernhard Reitz is and will remain particularly active.

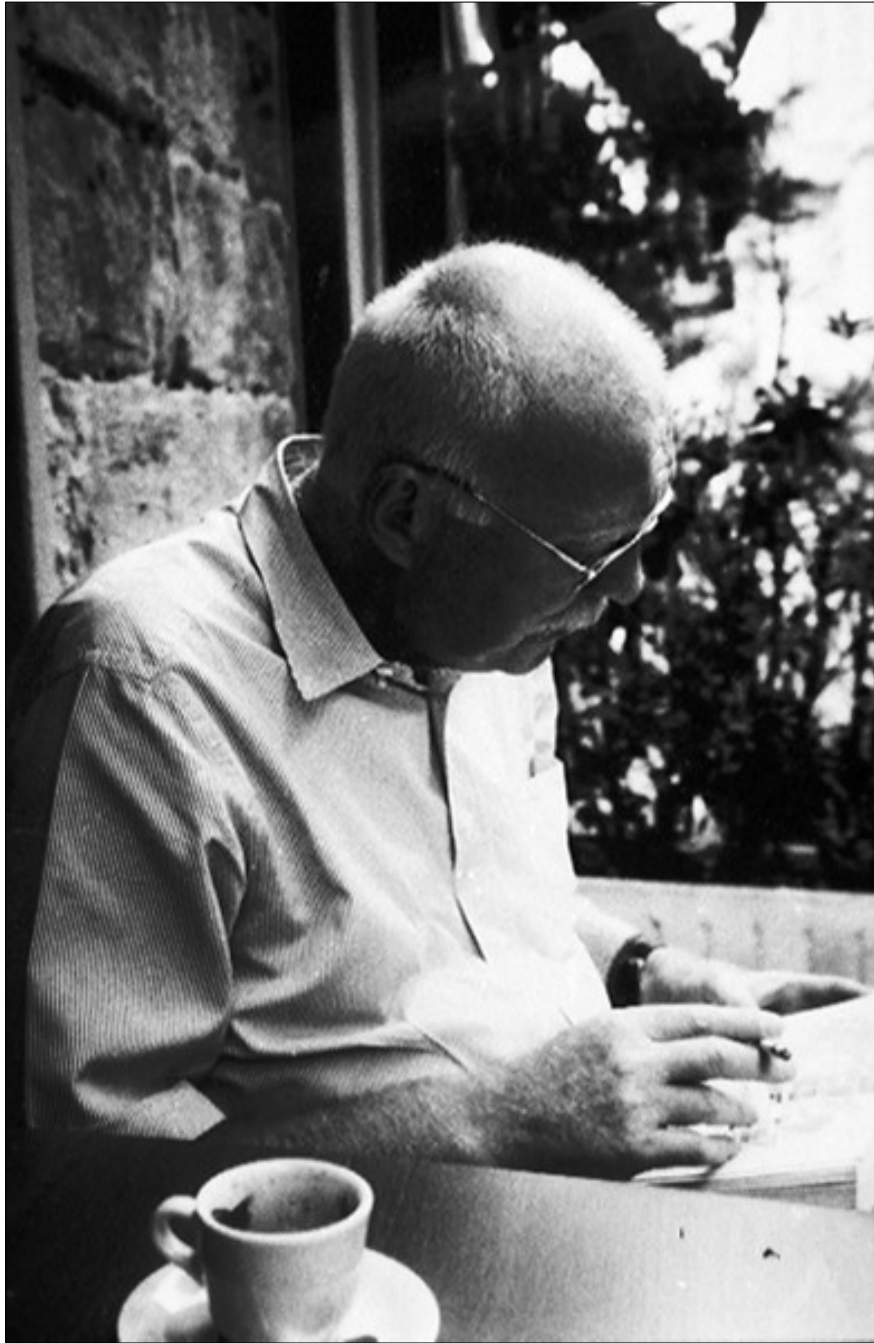


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I. History

SIGRID RIEUWERTS (MAINZ)

‘Tis Sixty Years Since . . . : Bernhard Reitz – Vita Brevis

‘Tis sixty years since Bernhard Reitz was born on a particularly cold night in the post-war winter of 1946. It could have been a dramatic entry into this world for nothing much was left of his parents’ home in Frankfurt after it had been hit by an American bomb – a lone bath tub was dangling from the only remaining wall and there was certainly not even a crib for a bed. From the river Main, his mother, Emmy Harbach, had taken refuge with her family in Limburg on the Lahn, while his father Otto Reitz was staying in Frankfurt for work, namely teaching children with special needs. When the family was reunited in Frankfurt in the 1950s, Bernhard was educated at the Carl-Schurz-Schule, a grammar school where, much to his regret, girls were only allowed to attend the year after he had taken his Abitur in 1966. It was here that Bernhard was first attracted to theatre and drama, staging an English-language performance of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. As a student director he had gone to great lengths in reconstructing the historical setting of the drama. He had hired gowns from the local theatre, asked some players to grow beards and employed language coaches. But all to no avail, as the following original caricature shows: one still had his watch on, others spoke English with a Hessian dialect and even he himself forgot to take off his glasses when coming on stage.



Neither his friendship with the Americans nor his love for theatre and drama did get off to a good start, and yet without knowing it, he was already on the road to becoming a Professor of English with a *Venia Legendi* for British and American Literature, with a special emphasis on drama.

With the view of becoming a secondary school teacher, he enrolled as a student of English and History (including educational psychology, politics and philosophy) at Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt. Among his academic teachers were Helmut Viebrock, Herbert Rauter, and Willi Erzgräber and when he had to choose whether to do his doctorate with Konrad Kraft (in History) or with Herbert Rauter (in American Studies), he opted for Willi Erzgräber and British literature. He obtained his doctorate in 1975 for a thesis on George Eliot and aspects of the historical novel at Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt. At the same time he worked as a senior lecturer at Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen. It was Erzgräber and Schuhmann's successor at Gießen, Raimund Borgmeier, who shaped him most. If it had not been for Borgmeier's generous offer of a position at the English Department in Gießen, he surely would have gone into school-teaching. He undertook research in contemporary drama in English under the guidance of Borgmeier, receiving his *venia legendi* in 1988 with his post-doctoral study '*The Stamp of Humanity*' – *Individuum, Identität, Gesellschaft und die Entwicklung des englischen Dramas nach 1956*. With his *Habilitationsschrift* he followed his own calling: Contemporary Drama in English. As Martin Middeke has pointed out in his contribution to this *Liber Amicorum*, the development and the international success of CDE, the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English, must to a great extent be credited to Bernhard Reitz and his enthusiasm.

After a short spell as *Privatdozent* and *Professor apl.* at Gießen, he was appointed full professor at Humboldt-Universität in Berlin. With his family – his wife Heidi and his daughter Laura (1982) – still in Frankfurt, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität succeeded in luring him away and thus in 1995 he became the Head of British Studies at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität. He hardly had time to settle in before taking on a number of administrative duties in Mainz, serving as Dean from 1998 to 2000, as Acting Head of the Department on a number of occasions and as an expert advisor in the development of the new curriculum for prospective teachers. He also served on various committees at the university, including the research funding committee.

As the list of publications at the end of this volume amply demonstrates, Bernhard Reitz has numerous research interests. The over one hundred publications to his name include critical text editions for schools as well as scholarly discussions of, among others, contemporary literature, Joseph Conrad, Thomas Hardy, the historical novel and Jewish writing. On these and other topics he organized and fostered conferences like the Contemporary Jewish Women's Writing Symposium, The British Writers' Festival, various conferences for the Society of Contemporary Drama in English, and more recently – together with Klaus Peter Müller in Germersheim – a conference on