

THREE PLAYS

DEBORAH MEADOWS

BLAZEVOX [BOOKS]
Buffalo, New York

Three Plays
by Deborah Meadows

Copyright © 2015

Published by BlazeVOX [books]

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced without the publisher's written permission, except for brief quotations in reviews.

Printed in the United States of America

Interior design and typesetting by Geoffrey Gatza
Cover photograph by Jack Nadelle

First Edition

ISBN: 978-1-60964-199-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014956312

BlazeVOX [books]
131 Euclid Ave
Kenmore, NY 14217

Editor@blazevox.org



publisher of weird little books

BlazeVOX [books]

blazevox.org

21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10

Guide Dogs

Characters

Professor A: Philosophy major who became a part-time professor, late 40s to early 50s. She has precise economic evaluation of situation but limited way to earn a living, has sizable student following from local university.

Kurt: Perpetual Day laborer, early 20s, highly educated, sweetly grunge in affect. He is former student of A, does cement work, has lime-dried hands.

Old Hi-Fi: A convincing version of a seeing-eye dog, yet when only Professor A and Kurt are present moves and speaks as a human, comments ironically on various scenes. Called "Old Hi-Fi" or "High Fidelity." He's looking for the blind person to whom he was assigned. Sceptic.

Part One:

Setting [near edge of viaduct under crumbling freeway bridge]

[Heard by audience before lights come up]

A: To say X about activism is not to see activism at all.

Kurt: Don't you grasp the geostrategic emphasis here?

[Lights up]

A: A common spirit exists in members of the group.

Kurt: It inspires enthusiasm, devotion, and strong regard for the honor of the group.

A: Language-era. Paleobotany might take up equisetum. At the university, the number of workers can be reduced when they palletize books, laboratory equipment, desks. *[makes gesture of absurdity]* That way just one fork-lift operator can lift up thousands each day sparing our backs if you *mis-think* the situation.

Kurt: I didn't come here. I didn't come here carrying anything.

A: There was no time. Everyone was rushing, pushing, shouting. Too compact. Compressed, then near the edge, I got away. Clothes on my back. And shoes. Good shoes. How long have you been here? What have you done for food?

Kurt: I have a small knife.

A: There were the missile men who carried out another supposed mission with guided missiles. They are not faceless drones. *[makes gesture of grid of missiles]* No, they can even draw on humanitarian work with teams of specialists and cultural diplomats.

Kurt: No one could stop them. Is my breathing shallow? I should change that. You look puzzled.

A: I am puzzled. It doesn't seem like many will make it. People got drawn into some kind of vision.

Kurt: Did it come from how we started to know things are dying off?

A: But, Kurt, isn't this sentimental, a way of reducing cuttlefish to their sepia secretions, a way of sequencing people. Some are here, near the edge where they have been for a time finding their way back. Their return—didn't we imagine their return?

Kurt: Or was it a protected area? Professor A, are we honest clay shaped here? Did they get away—fly, crawl, swim to this spot?

A: They became too numerous, compressed, moved to the edge. Crude, here at the viaduct camp-out processed by the nation's central thought ...

[They begin to tie down flapping tarp.]

Kurt: To steady the motion we can use stays or a long line indexed in a way that *unknown* becomes correlated to references that gum up the guesswork. *[points to drying laundry lines]*

Part Two:

The Argument and the March [street scene]

A: I came from far-flung cities.

Kurt: I came to this view after much deliberation.

A: I marched as a conjugated necklace the entire length of Main Street. [*The two link arms in this line.*]

Kurt: I saw the repeated blazes on trees.

A: I saw the yellow field with black lettering—film location signs.

Kurt: I saw wheat paste news that doesn't stay news.

A: Kurt, how about a change of property without money?

Kurt: Can it make for an electronic trading post, Professor A?

A: A commandeering, a lifting or liberating of materials into the universe.

Kurt: Can it be a free store?

A: Or traditions outside of traffic court where they really have you.

Kurt: What or who will lead?

A: We're led by the heart. *[Through this sequence the actors' gestures are both subtle and overly obvious.]*

Kurt: By experience.

A: By influence.

Kurt: By eros. *[Slightly thrusts forward the pelvis.]*

A: By message.

Kurt: By image.

A: By rhythm.

Kurt: By a strong guitar line. *[Actor twangs a well-known rock line.]*

[Long pause.]

A: Some of this is taking longer than they estimated.

Kurt: It's always like that.

A: The streets that are too ruined to take ... we can stop here.

Kurt: Why? There is nothing here—or too much rubble to continue.

A: We came back with those cameras and some old things that we can replace right now. Lighten the load.

Kurt: It doesn't make sense to do that. Isn't that like throwing away the invention of steel because it's too strong?

A: No, it's nothing like that. Nothing about cultural or technological loss. It's a reduction. A relation to the void.

Kurt: I mean here's the childhood location, and over there, the old memory machine, and over us all is the bureaucracy that runs between.

A: There were some hot days during the summer. I'm sure of that.

Kurt: You mentioned those, but is that a legitimate focus for someone who returns after enduring what you have? Finding what you have?

A: I lost many people. There's no trick to that.

Kurt: But your resolution of the theorem that stumped everyone else ...

A: For a few minutes it was gratifying, and so clear, but like any finding it joins a wave of simultaneity. First me, then two others at the Institute, then four, then sixty-four abroad all hit on it.

Kurt: A seemingly eternal idea?

A: A generational coherence.

Kurt: And we got there despite the news blackout.

A: Despite expense.

Kurt: Despite time.

A: Despite distance.

Kurt: Despite insufficient items.

A: Like gear.

Kurt: But here: here is our slingshot tweeted. *[Actor makes big-little gesture.]*

A: Note the historic marker as you pass. *[Both walking and one gives gesture of faux tour guide.]*

Kurt: Didn't this imply intimate knowledge of the way, and of all its difficulties and dangers?

A: Ah, ground crew at the ready.

[Crowd takes over and two actors disappear in crowd.]

[They re-surface after disappearing in crowd at end of last scene. Old Hi-Fi enters wearing a Seeing Eye dog harness remains unseen by Professor A and Kurt for a few lines.]

A: Planetism having taken over ...

Kurt: Planetism?

A: Yes, planetism, so water and with varying degrees of success all wolfed-down examples of production like these.

Old Hi-Fi: Has anyone seen my blind person? We seem to have gotten separated in the crowd scene.

Kurt: Who are you?

Old Hi-Fi: Old Hi-Fi's the name, leading the blind with honor and dignity for generations. *[says preceding as if an advertising slogan]* Also good in thought, irony, and at naps.

Kurt: I see. Hey, A, what happened to the promise of soft authoritarianism?

A: Or the promise of viable alternatives? *[addresses Old Hi-Fi]* Where was your blind person last seen?

Old Hi-Fi: In the crowd back there...

Kurt: *[ignores Old Hi-Fi]* What happened to renewable self-interest?

A: See? *[Points]*

[All three look.]

Kurt: Where?

A: Over there.

Kurt: Ok, yeah. Now I see where you mean.

A: See those who graze peacefully?

Kurt: But are they ...?

Old Hi-Fi: Are they us?

A: My sip of stuff this morning makes me herded by the thousands in the Long Drive to market, myself a slaughterhouse product.

Kurt: You?

A: Yes, I myself, a slaughterhouse product.

Kurt: A philosopher wants us to cognize the sentient nature of each one so we can be handed over to the amphitheater of rights. *[He pulls a potato from his pocket and the three toss this "hot potato" fashion in the next stretch up to "Their Old World charm."]*

A: Their abrogation. Rights!

Kurt: Their continuity.

Old Hi-Fi: Their origins.

A: The application of Rights.

Kurt: Their exclusions.

Old Hi-Fi: Exceptions.

A: Definitions.

Kurt: Presuppositions.

Old Hi-Fi: Implications.

A: Corollaries.

Kurt: Conclusions.

Old Hi-Fi: And utter beauty. *[puts away potato]*

A: Their Old New World charm.

Kurt: The historic patina of violent commerce in human flesh.

Old Hi-Fi: The circus of the courtroom made solemn by robes.

Kurt: And wigs. Don't forget the wigs.

A: The supporting cast of thousands.

Kurt: Slave drivers and cops.

Old Hi-Fi: Civil Rights lawyers and clients.

Kurt: They wait years for justice.

A: Age to silver-haired fragility before the vindication of their efforts.

Old Hi-Fi: Or some croak un-vindicated, too.

A: Let's test this, rulers and commoners alike.

Kurt: It's only democratic.

A: But let's not fall into some sort of facile causality to understand this as a reaction of billiard balls—there is another frame from which to hang our exploration.

Kurt: Do go on ...

A: By analogy? Or metaphor?

Old Hi-Fi: Why not? If you have to be obvious about it.

A: In the Coso Range the petroglyphs show hunters with atlatls.

Kurt: With?

A: Atlatls. It's a throwing stick that adds one more joint to the arm helping to launch a spear at much greater, and deadlier, velocity than by hand alone. *[makes atlatl-launching gesture]*

Kurt: So that's a technological advance. We really need one right here, right now.

A: Keynes wrote we should prime the pump.

Old Hi-Fi: Do what to the pump?

A: Add water to the water pump. It's a metaphor for the economy.

Kurt: Therefore, we need: 1. a technological answer, and 2. a metaphor. *[counts on fingers]*

A: No, actually it means spending more on the general populace through programs—jobs, bridges, art projects, that kind of thing.

Old Hi-Fi: What about building farms and factories here instead of subdivisions and big box stores for imports?

A: Keynes, John Maynard in his 1936 book, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* wrote that no country should ever run up a trade deficit.

Kurt: I bet Keynes' book concludes it would leave all of us day laborers like me or working for the few rich people waxing their pubic hair or whatever they need.

A: Did you see that? *[points]*

Kurt: Where?

A: The cops put plastic-tie handcuffs on four people over there including that mother and her four-year old boy.

Old Hi-Fi: Are they going to lock up kindergarteners now? Am I next?

A: I don't know. Let's see what happens.

Kurt: Maybe they'll outsource all four of them.

A: Outsource our protestors?

Kurt: And writers?

A: Those puppeteers?

Old Hi-Fi: They can get cheaper ones in rural China or one of those islands off the coast of Florida.

A: Well, not the island of Cuba.

Old Hi-Fi: No, those other ones where they sew pajamas for a noted theme park in southern California.

A: Oh, right. But right here, *we* have natural resources.

Kurt: Like bauxite.

A: *We* have a trained labor force.

Kurt: Maybe too obedient. *We* have unnatural resources.

A: Jackalopes and priests.

Kurt: *We* have an untrained workforce.

A: Gravity of the situation vs. violent hurricanes to defy it.

A., Kurt, & Old Hi-Fi: [*hands folded in prayer*] This is a bountiful nation—for sure. Amen.

Kurt: If they pass out a hot lunch, let's get in line.

A: I shouldn't like the fried food whose smell is wafting over us.

Old Hi-Fi: Food, yes food. [*Old Hi-Fi wanders off.*]

Kurt: It's bad for you.

A: Potatoes especially.

Kurt: Aren't they your downfall?

A: Even so, mashed potatoes are good and more than suffice as filling.

Kurt: They go straight to the hips.

A: I can eat potatoes all day, feel guilt by evening, redeem myself by the next morn.

Kurt: Because they're bad for you? A lack of virtue?

A: True, bad if they're done in hydrogenated vegetable oil like our most famous fast food empire that will go nameless.