EDUCATION THROUGH ALIENATION: ELEMENTS OF GESTALTIST LEARNING THEORY IN SELECTED PLAYS OF BERTOLT BRECHT

DISSERTATION

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This study explored the relationship between the dramatic and the educational theories developed by Bertolt Brecht and selected twentieth-century theories of pedagogy. A survey of Brecht's life and works revealed that although the stimulus-response theories of the associationist psychologists were inappropriate to Brecht's concepts, the three principal aspects of Gestaltism--perception, insight, and life space, as formulated by Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, Wolfgang Kohler, and Kurt Lewin--seemed profoundly related to Brecht's concern with man's ability to perceive and to learn about his environment.

Brecht strove to create perceptual images of historical environments. The characters, who represented various ideologies and philosophies in situations which stimulated insightful learning, struggled with life spaces that accurately resembled life outside the theatre.

Thus, Brecht utilized elements of the theories of perception, insight, and life space in his dramas as he strove to force his audiences to perceive the characters'

environments, to grasp the significance and relationships between the characters' environments and their own social milieu, and to recognize those influences in one's life space which attract or repel the individual.

The study also suggested that Brecht's works might be amenable to empirical study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Eugen Berthold Friedrich Brecht has been the subject of an enormous quantity of criticism.[1] Some authors are unrestrained in their praise; others express disdain, confusion, and disbelief. The consensus, however, is that Brecht's life and career showed a remarkably consistent pattern of rebellion and didacticism. Regardless of the situation in which he found himself, Brecht tried to alter opinions and implant ideologies. Along the way he established his concepts and modes of theatrical production.

The life and career of Bertolt Brecht, as he was known professionally, may be divided into rather clearly defined periods of activity, each dominated by a search for innonovation and a love of controversy.[2] First, his years of education to 1918 were marked by frequent outbursts of antagonism toward his family, his school, his society, and particularly World War I and its aftermath. Second, between 1918 and 1924, he wrote pessimistically about the conditions he was witnessing. Baal, Drums in the Night, and In the

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[1]Martin Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work (New York, 1971), p. ix.

[2]Ibid., p. xvi.

Jungle of the Cities were the chief expressions of his nihilism. Then, during his first Berlin years, from 1924 to 1933, he focused on the European Communist Movement and the theatre of Erwin Piscator, who was experimenting with what later became known as "Epic Theatre." In The Threepenny Opera, The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, and The Mother, Brecht dramatized the ideas of Marx in the style of Piscator.

The fourth period of Brecht's life--the years of exile from 1933 to 1947--was characterized by frustration and fear, as Brecht and his family fled their homeland to escape the Nazis, but also by the appearance of Brecht's major works: Galileo, Mother Courage and Her Children, The Good Woman of Setzuan, and The Caucasian Chalk Circle.[3] The exile years brought him artistic acclaim and political notoriety.

Finally, Brecht's last years (1947-1956) were spent in Europe, primarily in East Berlin.[4] There he formed the Berliner Ensemble, developed and practiced his theories of didactic theatrical production, and produced two plays: The Days of the Commune and The Tutor. His philosophy of didactic theatrical production was presented in A Short Organum for the Theatre, a book of essays published in 1949.

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[3]Oscar G. Brockett and Robert R. Findlay, Century of Innovation: A History of European and American Theatre and Drama Since 1870 (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1973), p. 421.

[4]Ibid., p. 425.

Statement of the Problem

The problem investigated in this research was the relationship that exists between the dramatic and educational theories proposed or practiced by Bertolt Brecht and selected twentieth-century theories of pedagogy.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to describe the theories and the plays of Bertolt Brecht in terms of selected twentieth-century pedagogical theories. In addition, this study sought the answers for the following questions.

1. What was the state of the European theatre from 1900 to 1956?

   a. What political, social, economic, and religious factors affected the European theatre between 1900 and 1956?

   b. Who were the influential personalities in the European theatre between 1900 and 1956?

   c. What styles of production were prevalent in the European theatre between 1900 and 1956?

2. What were the conditions of the German theatre in the years from 1900 to 1956?

   a. What were the political, social, economic, and religious factors which affected the German theatre between 1900 and 1956?

   b. Who were the influential personalities in the German theatre between 1900 and 1956?

c. What styles of production were prevalent in the German theatre between 1900 and 1956?

3. What were Brecht's contributions to the German theatre between 1900 and 1956?

a. Who influenced his earliest theatrical endeavors?

b. How did Marxist theories or the Communist movement affect Brecht's theatrical endeavors?

c. How did the idea of "Epic Theatre" affect Brecht's theatrical endeavors?

d. What was the "theory of alienation"?

4. What learning theories were developed between 1900 and 1956?

a. What learning theories were available to Brecht?

b. What learning theories would explain Brecht's theories and practices of didactic theatrical production?

5. What devices in the plays of Brecht affect the learning process?

6. How is the progression of Brecht's "teaching theory" mirrored in the plays from the major periods of his writing?

a. What was the significance of history in the plays written by Brecht?

b. In what ways did Brecht employ history for his educational purposes?

c. How were the didactic qualities of his dramas affected by the construction of his play scripts?

d. How was the construction of his play scripts affected by the didactic qualities of his dramas?

e. How was music integrated into the plays of Brecht?

f. How were songs integrated into the plays of Brecht?

g. How were "cabaret" practices used by Brecht?

7. What significant contributions to twentieth-century pedagogical theory may be extrapolated from the theories and practices of Bertolt Brecht?

Significance of the Study

Though Bertolt Brecht's concern for didacticism in drama and the theatre has been discussed by many authors, few if any works deal with the theories of pedagogy revealed in Brecht's criticism and plays. One reason is that his views and techniques do not conform easily to any one theory of learning. Indeed, Brecht's intense disdain for educational experiences of his life would encourage a belief that he knew and cared nothing about pedagogical theories. His independent thinking and behavior did not coincide with anything so structured.

Yet Bertolt Brecht quite definitely set out to teach his audiences.[5] His primary artistic purpose was to dramatize

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[5]Oscar G. Brockett, History of the Theatre, 3rd ed. (Boston, 1977), p. 512.

social and economic conditions in such a way that the people who saw his plays performed would restructure their patterns of behavior. First, they would be made to understand the socioeconomic forces that affected their lives. Then, the spectators would be taught a means of dealing with these forces. Finally, the audience members would be motivated to take a specific action to remedy the problems of their society.

This purpose and this plan, to use language current in 1982, place Brecht's theatrical and dramatic techniques squarely in the midst of concepts about psychomotor, cognitive, and affective learning behaviors. The most significant contribution of this dissertation, therefore, is the identification and analysis of pedagogical principles that, intentionally or accidentally, seem to have guided Brecht's artistic endeavors. A second contribution is the development of key insights into Brecht's life and works. A third contribution is the study of Brecht's specific application of pedagogical theories that may be employed by any teacher in any classroom; the works of Brecht could thus serve as special canons for the prospective teacher to follow. Finally, this dissertation offers help to the person who seeks to stage Brecht's plays or to write plays similar to his.

Survey of the Literature

The acquisition of knowledge has always been the object of a primary human motivation, and the conditions that promote learning have themselves been of intense concern. During the last one hundred years, this concern has been focused primarily on the field of psychology.

> The most fundamental and far-reaching event [in educational psychology] . . . in the early part of the twentieth century . . . was the behaviorist or Watsonian revolution. John B. Watson, a psychologist at Johns Hopkins University, spurned the techniques of introspection as well as the subject matter of previous psychologists. His claim was a simple and straightforward one: Consciousness was an internal and observable state which was not accessible to objective scientific inquiry. He proposed that the subject matter of psychology should be overt behavior which was observable and measurable. . . . What psychology had to study was overt behavior.[6]

Theories of Learning and Pedagogy

The scientific formulation of psychological explanations and conclusions has provided several theories of learning which have been highly regarded in the twentieth century. These theories, which include studies of behavior as indices of progress in learning, are classified into two general categories: association (or stimulus-response) theories and field theories.[7] The association theories include the following.

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[6]Roger M. Tarpy, Basic Theories of Learning (Palo Alto, California, 1975), pp. 5-6.

[7]W. Ralph McCaw, Educational Psychology (New York, 1964), p. 35.

Classical conditioning.--This term is applied to the experiments performed by the Russian psychologist Ivan Pavlov, who was the first to scrutinize conditioning scientifically. Pavlov's experiments consisted of sounding a bell at the same time that meat was presented to a dog. When the meat was presented, the dog salivated. After repeated pairings of the ringing bell and the presentation of the meat, the bell was rung without the meat being presented; this time the dog salivated to the bell alone, and it was concluded that the dog had learned to associate food expectancy with the sound of the bell.

The learning appeared to have four components: the unconditioned stimulus (the presentation of the meat), the unconditioned response (the salivation by the dog), the conditioned stimulus (the ringing of the bell), and the conditioned response (the salivation at the sound of the bell).[8] In addition, Pavlov determined that several factors had to exist before learning (or conditioning) could occur:

1. Contiguity of the stimuli: the stimuli had to be presented close together in time;

2. Motivation: pairing of the stimuli had to take place when the dog was hungry to call forth a conditioned response;

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[8]Ernest R. Hilgard and Gordon H. Bower, Theories of Learning, 3rd ed. (New York, 1966), p. 48.

3. Repetition: the pairing of the stimuli had to be repeated a number of times before the conditioned response occurred. The strength of the conditioned response was directly related to the number of pairings of the stimuli.

Connectionism.--Occasionally referred to as instrumental conditioning, this theory, which was developed by Edward L. Thorndike, stated that when the conditioned response is instrumental in satisfying some need of the organism, the learning is made more permanent.[9] Thorndike placed a hungry cat into a box which had a door that could be opened from the inside by the action of a lever. Outside the box he placed some fish the cat liked. After a large number of trials, the cat learned to release itself from the box and eat the fish. As the succession of trials continued, the cat was able to shorten his time in the box; finally, he was deliberately depressing the lever almost as quickly as he was placed in the box. From this and other similar experiments, Thorndike determined that connections are formed in the nervous system between stimuli and responses. To illustrate his theory of connectionism, he postulated three laws.

1. The Law of Readiness: When any connections are ready to be connected, it is satisfying for this action to occur. If they are not ready to be connected, it is annoying

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[9]Howard L. Kingsley, The Nature and Conditions of Learning, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1957), p. 85.

for them to be connected. When any connections are ready to be connected, not to do so is annoying.

2. The Law of Exercise: Repeated exercise that is appropriate and provides satisfaction of the motives for the subject strengthens the connections.

3. The Law of Effect: When a connection between a stimulus and a response is followed by a satisfying state of affairs, the strength of the connection is increased. When it is followed by unsatisfying results, the connection is weakened.[10]

On the basis of further research, Thorndike later modified his position. Placing much less emphasis on the law of exercise and much more on the positive aspect of the law of effect, he expressed concern with both prevailing learning theory and its application to the classroom situation. He stated that the learner was ready to respond, was capable of varying his response as needed, and was trying to respond to a stimulus in a way similar to a previous situation in which the response was correct and satisfying. Each correct response, he asserted, should be rewarded through either intrinsic satisfaction or extrinsic praise, in which case the situation would be repeated to reinforce or strengthen the connection.[11]

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[10]Hilgard and Bower, pp. 18-20.

[11]Ibid., p. 27.

Contiguous conditioning.--Edwin R. Guthrie was the originator of the principles of contiguous conditioning, based on the connection of stimulus and response, but rejecting Thorndike's Law of Effect. According to Guthrie's theory, all responses are associated with some stimuli and are full strength on a single pairing of the stimulus with the response.[12] Repetition does not strengthen the response, but improvement results from the establishment of a number of correct associations in the total stimulus situation. He further stressed that particular combinations of stimuli and responses are what is learned, with perfect performance resulting from associating correct responses with the appropriate stimuli. Certain responses are forgotten when subsequent learning interferes with the learned stimulus-response combinations.

Guthrie's theory differs markedly from Thorndike's in the study of motivation and rewards. He states that satisfaction is not instrumental in learning, and reward likewise is of no significance. The important matter, according to Guthrie, is the contiguity of stimulus and response.

Shortly before his death in 1959, Guthrie formulated a list of eight assumptions concerning associative learning which emphasize the contiguous nature of stimulus-response.

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[12]Kingsley, p. 85.

1. Patterning of physical stimuli is effective of itself, and is not affected by the degrees of intensity or the summation of the effects of stimulus elements.

2. A given pattern of physical stimuli is accepted by the observer to be a cue for the observed organism only on the basis of supplementary data available to the observer.

3. The effectiveness of physical stimuli is governed by a class of response called attention.

4. When two cues that have been associated with incompatible movement patterns are both present, action is withheld and the movements involved become evident, including behavior which may be called scanning.

5. At any moment the class of movement responses possible is limited by the ongoing action.

6. Rules which do not take into account what the animal is doing when stimulated will not be descriptive of the phenomena of association.

7. The complexity of the determiners of action requires that prediction allow for high degrees of error.

8. What is being noticed, as a response is elicited, becomes a potential cue for that response.[13]

Systematic behavior and reinforcement.--Using habit as a central concept, Clark L. Hull extended Pavlov's work by

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[13]Edwin R. Guthrie, "Association by Contiguity," General Systematic Formulations, Learning, and Special Processes, Vol. II of Psychology: A Study of a Science, edited by Sigmund Koch, 7 vols. (New York, 1959), pp. 187-189.

defining the process of learning in a systematic mechanistic fashion which avoids any reference to consciousness and derives the bulk of its conclusions about habit from extensive experimentation with conditioned responses. In 1937, Hull concluded that reinforcement is the central principle of all learning. According to Hull's theory, the strength of the connection between a stimulus and a response is dependent on the span of time between the stimulus and its response. Additional strength of the connection must be gained by a reinforcement that provides a need-reduction for the subject. The reinforcement can be either primary, providing actual reduction of the physical needs of the organism, or secondary, in which a neural stimulus acquires strength through association with a primary reinforcement. The highest level of learning or strength of habit is dependent on the relationship between the size of the need reduction, the interval of time between the responses and the reinforcements, and the interval of time between the conditioned stimulus and the response.

Though revised a number of times, Hull's theory of learning by reinforcement remained basically unchanged. It can be summarized as follows.

1. A stimulus acts on an organism, resulting in a neural impulse.

2. Because a degree of tension exists in the organism, this neural impulse will lead to a reaction, which is known in psychology as a drive.

3. The reaction, or response, reduces the drive, and this reduction is known as reinforcement.

4. As a result of the reduction of the drive produced by the reinforcement, the nervous system of the organism is reorganized to form a habit.

5. The strength of the conditioned response is affected by various factors, known as intervening variables.

6. The learning event must be systematic and orderly in arrangement, facilitating the learning of habits and skills which would range from simple to complex.

7. There must be a concerted effort to stimulate drives within the learner because of the importance of reinforcement to the overall theory, and practice for the purpose of building habits must be emphasized.

Operant conditioning.--B. F. Skinner enlarged Pavlov's theory by stating that man is capable of responding on his own, without the benefit of external stimuli, because he can have the power to determine his own behavior by weighing the consequences and rewards of that behavior. By thus "emitting a response," rather than responding to a stimulus like Pavlov's dog, man changes his environment. If the change is pleasing and reinforcing to the organism, the probability of

that response recurring is strengthened. On the other hand, if the response is not followed by reinforcing consequences, the probability of that response recurring is weakened. Thus, the response becomes a sort of stimulus to respond again in a similar setting; "learning" is a change in the probability of a response. Such reinforcement may occur at fixed or variable intervals and in fixed or variable ratios.

It seems obvious that the association theories focus on the individual meeting his environment directly. The field theories attempt to deal with the individual's perception of his environment and with all factors in the situation at once. The field theories include the following:

Gestalt-field theory.--In 1912, a German psychologist named Max Wertheimer, together with Kurt Koffka, Wolfgang Kohler, Kurt Lewin, and others, placed the German term "Gestalt" at the center of learning. Gestalt theory assumes that there is essential unity in nature, with each phenomenon being regarded as a whole and not a sum of its parts.[14] Discounting the significance of the stimulus-response, and the need-reduction, connectionist theories, Gestaltists believe learning is a matter of insight, or a "sudden grasping of the solution which results in a process that runs its course in

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[14]Louis P. Thorpe and Allen M. Schmuller, Contemporary Theories of Learning with Applications to Education and Psychology (New York, 1954), p. 205.

accordance with the nature of the situation."[15] That situation--the organized field of perception--is divided into the figure and the ground. The figure is at the locus of attention, while the ground is the indefinite, sometimes formless, periphery of the field of perception and is sometimes without significance to the figure itself.[16] Learning becomes a function of various forces in the field of the present situation and a "trace" of the perceiver's previous experience. In addition, there is a "process in perception which can select, reactivate, or in some manner bring out the trace appropriate for use in a present situation."[17] The process occurs according to the following "laws."

1. Law of Similarity: According to this law, a memory trace, or result from a past experience, is recalled in perception, when objects of similar color or form are perceived and are organized into groups.

2. Law of Proximity: Perceptual groups are more easily remembered when there is a closeness of their parts, and the older a perception is, the less chance there is that it can be recalled.[18]

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[15]Charles E. Skinner, Educational Psychology, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1951), p. 408.

[16]George W. Hartmann, Gestalt Psychology, a Survey of Facts and Principles (New York, 1935), pp. 25-26.

[17]Thorpe and Schmuller, p. 212.

[18]Alfred E. Kuenzli, ed., The Phenomenological Problem (New York, 1959), p. 164.

3. Law of Closure: Figures with closed areas are more stable and satisfying than those with open areas, and there is a sense of satisfaction for the perceiver when he completes a partial figure or fills in details that might be missing from the figure.

4. Law of Continuation: Imperfect or incomplete figures are improved with the passage of time, the "good" or improved figures remain stable in the perception, and an imperfect figure perceived a number of times begins to appear more perfect or complete to the observer.[19]

Sign-gestalt-expectation.--Edward C. Tolman wrote that learning is the "overt manifestation of some kind of striving for a goal," and this striving travels a route which is composed of the material that is learned by the individual.[20] As the route is traveled, the individual encounters signs and cues which are related to the goal, and are recognized as such.[21] The ultimate satisfaction of needs for the learner occurs when the goal is reached and the signs and cues are perceived as less difficult alternatives for reaching the goal. They, not reinforcement, confirm the experience and result in learning.[22] In a dynamic universe, human behavior

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[19]Hartmann, p. 188.

[20]Thorpe and Schmuller, p. 292.

[21]Hilgard and Bower, p. 195.

[22]Ibid., p. 207.

operates in favor of survival by learning to apprehend signs and cues encountered in experience and by understanding their relationship to the goals sought by the learner.[23] Grasping this means-to-an-end relationship allows the learner to anticipate his behavior when the same experience is repeated in the future. Thus, the concept of reward is not important in Tolman's theory, because it emphasizes only confirmation or negation of the experiences as an influence on the behavior of the organism, and does not in itself insure that learning will occur.

Phenomenological theory.--In this branch of Gestaltist theory, the individual's determination of reality and his patterns of behavior are dependent on the manner in which he views himself as a part of the universe, the whole, the perceptual field:

> People do not behave according to the facts as others see them. They behave according to the facts as they see them. What governs behavior from the point of view of the individual himself are his unique perceptions of himself and the world in which he lives, the meanings things have for him.[24]

Discovering one's own private world of reality, stressing that all changes of behavior and learning reflect the changes the individual perceives in himself and the world

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[23]Thorpe and Schmuller, p. 320.

[24]Arthur W. Combs and Donald Snygg, Individual Behavior: A Perceptual Approach to Behavior, rev. ed. (New York, 1959), p. 17.

around him,[25] and seeing this learning experience as a natural and normal process of development for each individual, phenomenologists believe that behavior results from the individual's attempts to reorganize his field of perception, including his own self-perception. Any changes in the perceptual field result in a change of behavior.[26]

Didacticism in the Western European Theatre

Didacticism in the theatre is not a recent development. In classical Greece, the primary goal of the theatre artists was to praise the gods and to explore man's relationships with and comprehension of the powers that govern the universe. The extant plays frequently advise the members of the audience to seek a satisfying or at least a different life.[27] The moral instructions in the Greek dramas lent even more value and nobility to an already-revered art form. The role of the dramatist in Greek times was described by the term didaskalos, which is translated "teacher." He was considered to be a complete teacher of both the performers, while the drama was in the production process, and the spectators who witnessed the finished product.[28]

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[25]Ibid., p. 18.

[26]Kuenzli, p. 57.

[27]As an example, the text of Oedipus Rex, by Sophocles, contains such an admonition in the closing scene.

[28]Brockett, p. 26.

During the Middle Ages in Europe (c. 475-1375 A.D.), the theatre served as a teaching instrument for the church.[29] The various parts of the Mass, the story of the resurrection of Christ, other stories from the Bible, the lives of the saints and apostles in the miracle plays, and original stories of man's relationships with his fellow men and the universe were dramatized first within the cathedrals and churches and then in various secular locations as well. By the fourteenth century, productions of liturgical plays were seen by throngs of people.[30]

The need for didacticism in the dramas continued to be recognized after the Middle Ages. In the sixteenth century, for example, Sir Philip Sidney defended dramatic literature against the onslaught of Puritan condemnation, describing its influence on the mind and conduct of human beings.[31] The seventeenth-century's views were best expressed by John Dryden, who wrote that "a play ought to be 'a just and lively image of human nature, . . . for the delight and instruction of mankind.'"[32] Then, in the eighteenth century, Denis Diderot advocated the development of a drama which

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[29]Jerry V. Pickering, Theatre: A History of the Art (Los Angeles, 1978), p. 121.

[30]Brockett, p. 103.

[31]Barrett H. Clark, European Theories of the Drama (New York, 1947), p. 103.

[32]W. P. Ker, ed., Essays of John Dryden (New York, 1961), p. 36.

"concentrated on the enunciation of moral truths, preached the sermon of natural virtues and the crimes of civilization, aroused tearful pity for those cruelly oppressed, and held up the serious middle-class merchant as an object of supreme admiration."[33] Contemporary with Diderot, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing wrote that "from the stage we are not to learn what such and such an individual man has done, but what every man of a certain character would do under certain circumstances."[34]

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries, like those before them in Europe (and now in America), saw didacticism made the central element in drama. Thesis melodramas, characterized by predictable plots involving heroines, heroes, and villains of assorted descriptions in scenes of confrontation and struggle that were spectacular, gave way to the illusionistic dramas of ideas presented by Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, and many who came after them. Twentieth-century playwrights either copied the techniques of Ibsen and Strindberg or sought non-realistic methods to create illusions that served didactic purposes.[35]

It remained for Brecht, following the lead of Erwin Piscator, to seek to remove the illusionism and leave only

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[33]Allardyce Nicoll, World Drama from Aeschylus to Anouilh (New York, 1950), p. 403.

[34]Vera Mowry Roberts, The Nature of Theatre (New York, 1971), p. 141.

[35]Ibid., p. 112.

the didacticism.[36] Particularly at odds with the illusionism and the romanticism of Richard Wagner, but also disliking the orthodox theatre, especially the ranting and pretentious German classical stage, Brecht sought to present the complexity of the human condition during a time in which the lives of individuals, when separated from the influences of the social, economic, and historical forces, could no longer be understood.[37] Rejecting the concept of a logical, well-made drama derived from a matrix of cause and effect, the plays of Brecht were structured in a loose-knit, episodic manner.[38] There was no attempt to create suspense or surprise, audience involvement, illusion of reality, or dramatic climax. Such as it was, the story of the play was revealed in a series of separate dramatic situations, each one virtually complete in itself.[39] The interest of the audience was maintained and the total effect of the play was developed by juxtaposing scenes of contrasting mood and impact. According to Brecht, the epic theatre, with its sequential arrangement of incidents, uninhibited by the unifying qualities of time, setting, and plot, was to act on the spectators' intellects and thereby compel them to understand the meaning of the

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 133.

[38] Brockett and Findlay, p. 419.

[39] Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, pp. 134-135.

scenes on stage rather than be concerned with the emotional impact of the scene.[40] He preferred the "clash of judgment, the struggle of syllogisms, the conscious discovery of what is false and stupid in the world, [instead of] the emotional discovery of what is disgusting and bad."[41] The theatre was to become a "tool of social engineering, a laboratory of social change."[42] With music, masks, songs, and other traditionally theatrical devices, he tried to bring his audiences to an awareness of the world of that day. With a better understanding of the world's actual conditions, the audiences viewing Brecht's plays were supposed to discover ways and means of improving their own lives.[43]

The dominant philosophy of productions in Brecht's epic theatre may be summed up by his theory of "verfremdung" or "alienation."[44] Influenced by the use of the chorus in Greek tragedy, the theatrical conventions and traditions of Elizabethan England, China, Japan, and India, the folk plays of Austria and Bavaria, the cabaret productions of Berlin, and even the clown techniques of fairground entertainments,

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[40]Peter Demetz, ed., Brecht: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962), p. 24.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 129.

[43]George R. Kernodle, Invitation to the Theatre (New York, 1967), p. 53.

[44]Pickering, pp. 597-598.

Brecht developed a complete restructuring of the traditional theatre performer-audience relationship.

Definition of Terms

Conditioning.--Conditioning is a form of learning in which two small stimuli are presented together and the response elicited by one of them, the unconditioned stimulus, comes to be elicited also by the other, the conditioned stimulus.[45]

Didactic.--From the Greek word didaskalos, meaning "teacher," didactic, to Bertolt Brecht, became synonymous with "propagandist." German politics furnished much of Brecht's inspiration for his didactic view of the theatre; his political didacticism frequently became his own form of propaganda, widely accepted but controversial.[46]

Gestus.--This is a key word in Brecht's theory, but one for which there is no exact English equivalent. As Brecht describes gestus in A Short Organum for the Theatre, it is "the realm of attitudes adopted by the characters towards one another . . . physical attitudes, tone of voice, and facial expression . . . even those attitudes which would appear to be quite private, such as the utterances of physical pain in

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[45]Winfred F. Hill, Learning: A Survey of Psychological Interpretations (San Francisco, 1963), pp. 221-222.

[46]Andrew E. Doe, "Brecht's Lehrstücke: Propaganda Failures," Educational Theatre Journal, XIV (December, 1962), 289-296.

an illness, or of religious faith."[47] To summarize, a gestus is a revelation of a relationship by a deed, word, or look.

Illusion.--Illusion was the goal of a style of theatrical presentation which emerged from the drama of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In this style, attempts were made to cause the audience to believe that what was appearing on the stage was an actual scene from life being viewed through an invisible "fourth wall." In the theatre of illusion, nothing was permitted to shatter or distort the illusion.

Imitation.--Imitation is defined as the process or the result of trying to be the same as an original, of mimicking, of reproducing in form, color, texture, etc., of resembling. According to Crane, "an 'imitation' is brought about whenever we succeed, by means of art, in producing an analogue of some natural process or form, endowed with similar powers to affect other things or us, in materials which are not naturally disposed to assume of themselves any such process or form."[48]

Misuc.--A term devised by Brecht which he used to describe his own variety of music-making for his productions, misuc differs markedly from traditional music not only in the

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[47]Bertolt Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic, edited by John Willett (New York, 1964), p. 198.

[48]Richard S. Crane, ed., Critics and Criticism: Ancient and Modern (Chicago, 1952), p. 48.

spelling of the word; there is a totally different thrust and purpose for misuc. Exemplifying his dislike for music formally performed in large concert halls by stuffily-dressed gentlemen, Brecht's misuc was "a kind of speaking-against-the-music which can be very effective just because of an obstinate matter-of-factness, independent of and incorruptible by the music and rhythm."[49] Filled with "changing rhythms that match Brecht's irregular lines" and "persistent yet slightly unexpected melodies,"[50] Brecht's music becomes a "kind of punctuation, an underlining of the words, a well-aimed comment giving the gist of the action of the text."[51]

Presentational acting.--Presentational acting is a style of performance in which the actors offer the audience the speech, movements, mannerisms, and emotional attitudes suitable to the persons in a drama. During rehearsals and performances, presentational actors refuse "to disguise the fact that they [are] actors in front of an audience, . . . exploring, exploiting, and enjoying their medium."[52] The performance is constructed of carefully planned movements and readings which have been thoroughly rehearsed.

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[49]Bertolt Brecht, "Notes on 'The Threepenny Opera,'" Plays, Vol. 1 (London, 1965), p. 186.

[50]John Willett, The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht: A Study of Eight Aspects (New York, 1968), p. 138.

[51]Ibid., p. 132.

[52]Edwin Duerr, The Length and Depth of Acting (New York, 1962), p. 389.

Reinforcement.--Reinforcement is an event in the learning process which, according to the associationists, serves to increase the strength of the response to the stimulus, forming a stronger bond or connection between them. In Skinner's theory of operant conditioning, reinforcement influences the probability factor in the stimulus-response situation.

Representational acting.--In this style of acting, the actors seek to perform their roles by actually thinking the thoughts and experiencing the emotions attributable to the characters they are portraying. They strive "to deceive audiences into believing that they [are] creatures of daily life, behaving and talking as if they weren't onstage."[53]

Verfremdungseffekt.--To Brecht, verfremdungeseffekt meant estrangement or alienation, the nucleus of Brecht's concept of Epic Theatre. It is defined as a process of forcing the members of the audience to view things in a different light, to "alienate" or "estrange" themselves from what was familiar to them. Once an audience becomes accustomed to a given circumstance, for example, and believes that such a condition has always prevailed and will always prevail, the progress of the play is to be interrupted while the audience is made to ponder the rationale underlying the events they have just witnessed onstage.

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[53] Ibid.

Hypothesis

There is a commonality between the principles of Gestaltist theories of learning and the didactic principles and devices in selected plays of Bertolt Brecht.

Methodology

The material for this study was acquired from works of recognized authors in the fields of theatre and educational psychology. Prominent historians of theatre were consulted to provide the data necessary for a description of the theatrical milieu of the early twentieth century in Europe and Germany. The writings of three noted authorities on Bertolt Brecht--John Willett, Martin Esslin, and Frederic Ewen--were used as foundation sources for the life and times of Brecht, as well as critical analyses of Brecht's plays. Numerous articles from literary and theatrical publications provided the balance of the information. Selected plays of Brecht were given thorough examination to reveal his didactic devices and practices.

The theories of the major proponents of Gestaltist thinking were examined, noting comparative relationships to the representative works of Brecht. Particular emphasis was given to the Gestaltist concepts of perception, insight, and life space.

The dissertation is organized in the following manner:

Chapter I -- Introduction;

Chapter II -- The Life and Times of Bertolt Brecht;

Chapter III -- The Dramatic Art of Bertolt Brecht;

Chapter IV -- Brecht's Theory of Learning Through Theatrical Experiences;

Chapter V -- Conclusion.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BERTOLT BRECHT

During Bertolt Brecht's lifetime (1898-1956), Germany changed from a world power--unified, economically sound, and politically expanding--to a defeated and depressed country of warring factions and divided loyalties. Two world wars, the Nazi regime, and economic ruin left two Germanies, one capitalist and Americanized, the other communist and Russianized. Since Brecht was a Marxist, after World War II he threw in with East Germany. All his life he had opposed first the empire of Wilhelm I, then the Weimar Republic, and finally the Third Reich of Adolph Hitler. Because the Socialist party--its growth matching Germany's on the world stage--supported the efficiency of the state, total respect for authority, hierarchical separations of the populace into classes and professions, an official bureaucracy, military power, governmental elitism, and intellectualism among the young, Brecht, who had always hated these things, also opposed the Socialists. Where he was in step with his generation, however, was in his break with the past, especially the neo-romanticism and provincialism of the late nineteenth century. After 1900, the intellectual, scientific, literary, and philosophical movements in Germany

were harnessed to serve the all-powerful state; Bertolt Brecht resisted that loss of intellectual and artistic freedom. This chapter will examine the motives and actions manifest in Brecht's life-long war against authority, search for innovation, and love of controversy. The examination will deal with Brecht's early life (1898-1917), his years of revolution and nihilism (1917-1924), his life in Berlin as a Marxist (1924-1933), his exile (1933-1941), his time in the United States (1941-1947), and his last years in East Germany (1947-1956).

Brecht's Early Life (1898-1917)

The parents of Bertolt Brecht moved from the Black Forest of Germany to Augsburg, a suburb of Munich, before Brecht was born. Augsburg was recognized as a commercial and industrial city, and was known also for banking, textiles, and paper. Brecht's father secured employment in a paper factory and by 1914 was serving as its director. A respected and successful citizen, the elder Brecht was of the Catholic faith. His wife, the daughter of a well-known civil servant in Achern, was a Protestant.[1] On both sides of the family, the ancestors shared reputations for shrewdness and stubbornness in the peasant society of Baden.

Bertolt Brecht was born on February 10, 1898, in Augsburg. Christened in his mother's Protestant faith and given

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[1]Martin Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work (New York, 1971), p. 4.

the name of Eugen Berthold Friedrich Brecht, he grew into a sensitive, taciturn child who showed signs of his nonconformist and rebellious nature in quiet, negative ways. Since he disliked the three names he was given, in his young adult years he rejected them all. Eugen and Friedrich were too strong in their patriotic connotations and thus did not fit his leftist inclinations. He changed Berthold to Bertolt to avoid the soft sentimentality of "-hold," which can be tranlated "lovely."[2]

In a similar manner, Brecht refused to follow his father into the paper business, for Brecht considered himself a rebel and traitor to his bourgeois background. This revolt against parental respectability may have been inspired by his father's mother. At the age of seventy-two, when her husband died, she shocked the family by abandoning any signs of gentility or decorum and consorting "with all sorts of queer and not quite respectable people."[3]

As he grew through his teen years, Brecht assumed the demeanor of a shrewd, calculating country peasant, with an "ingrained distrust of city slickers" and "anything that sounds highflown or pompous." His rejection of all sentimentality and eloquence, his love of irony and parody, and his frequently acknowledged faith in "the wisdom of cowardice" can all be traced to his peasant heritage.[4]

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[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 5. [4] Ibid.

Brecht's school years were filled with rebellion and opposition to authority. After four years at an uninspired elementary school, he enrolled at the Augsburg Realgymnasium. During his nine years of being "preserved," he felt he "did not succeed in educating his teachers."[5] Indolent and independent, his behavior a constant source of irritation to his teachers and many of his classmates, he studied medicine but succeeded only in learning to play the guitar. When a heart condition prevented his participation in sports, he began to study metaphysics.[6] Then an intense curiosity led the young lad of fifteen to other places with more excitement than he found, or could create, at school; he discovered the local "red-light district." But also, in reaction to the mechanical and dull classroom situations, he developed his skill at misleading his instructors. He even perfected methods of having his usually poor grades altered to reflect a much greater academic achievement.[7] One of the most positive aspects of his years at the Realgymnasium, however, was the start of his poetry-writing. He was successful in getting some of his work published in the local newspaper.[8]

The summer of 1914 proved to be a fateful time for young Brecht. In June, Archduke Francis Ferdinand was

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[5]Karl H. Schoeps, Bertolt Brecht (New York, 1977), p. 6.

[6]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 6.

[7]Schoeps, p. 7.

[8]Ibid.

assassinated, and on August 1, Germany declared war on Russia.[9] A wave of patriotism swept the nation, and Brecht became feverishly supportive of the German cause. This ardor lasted for only one year, after which Brecht, still a student at the Realgymnasium, began writing poetry which was more sympathetic toward the political left. Almost expelled from school for writing an anti-war essay, he was saved only because a teacher persuaded the rest of the faculty that this was just a matter in which a young mind was greatly influenced by the horrors of war. Brecht's last two years at the Realgymnasium, however, saw him become a "cause celebre." He became the central figure in a group of friends with whom he was to maintain a lifelong comradeship in pursuit of revolution.

Revolution and Nihilism (1917-1924)

Though Brecht entered the University at age nineteen to study medicine, shortly thereafter he was drafted into the German army and assigned to a military hospital in Augsburg, where he worked as a medical orderly. Brecht found his job such an emotional ordeal that what little patriotic spirit he still had was destroyed. Many years after the war, in 1937, he wrote a recollection of his feelings of his work as an orderly:

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[9]Frederic Ewen, Bertolt Brecht: His Life, His Art, and His Times (New York, 1967), p. 49.

> As a very young boy I was mobilized, and served in a hospital. I dressed wounds, applied iodine, gave enemas, and blood-transfusions. Should a doctor have said to me, "Brecht, amputate this leg," I would have replied, "At your command, Excellency!" and would have amputated the leg. Had someone said to me, "Brecht, make a trepanning!," I would have opened a man's skull and messed with his brain. I saw with my own eyes how they patched up people post-haste so as to ship them back to the front as soon as possible.[10]

While serving as a medical orderly, however, Brecht composed one of his best-known poems, "The Legend of the Dead Soldier." This poem not only made him famous, but also resulted in his being placed on Hitler's infamous blacklist of 1923.[11] The feelings the poem expressed led Brecht to provoke his superiors by defying the rules of dress and conduct. His first assignment was in the ward for venereal diseases, where he startled everyone with gaudy civilian clothes he occasionally wore on duty. Irresponsible, disruptive actions such as this, or such as using servant girls and orderlies to handle the preparation and distribution of the daily reports from his ward, characterized his life in the military.

Though the rumblings of revolution during 1918 and 1919 in Bavaria no doubt affected Brecht's thinking, he did not yet grasp the full importance of what was occurring. Demonstrations, assassinations, and other forms of uprising in Munich, all contributing to the establishment of a

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[10] Ibid., p. 61.

[11] Ibid.

short-lived Soviet government in Bavaria, were more distressing, and a distracted, confused Brecht was released from the military. He returned to the Ludwig Maximillian University in Munich, but did not resume his studies in medicine. After a brief period studying general science, he switched to literature.

A seminar on drama, taught by Dr. Arthur Kutscher, a close friend and apostle of Frank Wedekind, the leading expressionistic dramatist of the time, was particularly interesting to Brecht.[12] The chaotic society of post-war Germany was powerfully reflected in the literary and artistic movement called "expressionism," which showed many faces and embraced divergent and sometimes contradictory adherents. Walter Muschg, author and critic, defined expressionism as the "intellectual revolt against the bourgeoisie that is on the verge of suicide," and expressionists as "prisoners of an unfree age," in which they "affirm absolute freedom."[13]

A major step toward this ideal had been taken by August Strindberg in 1902 when he wrote The Dream Play, which he called a drama of the "soul" of man.[14] Expressionistic plays after Strindberg were characterized by their use of the irrational, the unconscious, the repressed, and the dream

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[12]Ibid., p. 63.

[13]Walter Muschg, Von Trakl zu Brecht, p. 337, translated and cited in Ewen, p. 74.

[14]Ewen, p. 74.

world of mankind. The plays attempted a history of the soul in symbolic, abstract, and universal terms. The expressionist playwrights who rose to prominence were Walter Hasenclever, Ernst Toller, Franz Werfel, George Kaiser, and Arnolt Bronnen.

In 1919, Theodore Daubler, by then a revered leader of the expressionist movement, announced, "Our times have a grand design: a new eruption of the soul! The 'I' creates the world!"[15] This concept of the Absolute Ego was the creative center of the movement, and Man was the subject of the expressionists' attention.

Of all the authors and poets in German literature, however, Brecht felt the closest kinship to Georg Büchner, who had died in 1837 at the age of twenty-three, his work almost completely unknown. A manuscript discovered nearly thirty years later came to be recognized as a work of the great genius. By Brecht's time, Büchner was widely admired for two major plays, Wozzeck and Danton's Death. The first could be considered a forerunner of expressionism, and the second a precursor of the epic theatre of Piscator and Brecht.[16] Büchner's works, regardless of their intent, strengthened Brecht's preference for a loosely-constructed episodic dramaturgy something like that of the Elizabethan chronicle plays. The title role in Wozzeck was a passive and

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[15]Ewen, p. 74.

[16]Ibid., p. 70.

unheroic hero similar to the character of Andreas Kragler that Brecht would create in Drums in the Night.[17]

No doubt what attracted Brecht to the plays of Buchner and the expressionists was their common focus on rebellion: the young against the aged, sons against fathers, pupils against teachers, and the new against the old. By 1920, the political strife in Germany had spread from the public to the private sectors of the society--to the bedroom, the parlor, the study, and the classroom. The class distinctions and the respect for authority which had been so prominent in Germany for decades began to crumble.[18] In the chaos of these post-war changes, both the expressionists and Brecht tried to propose answers through their dramas. Brecht's poems allowed the anarchist, the nihilist, the cynic, the alienated, and the lost to vent their feelings. As Brecht became the acknowledged voice of the displaced and the defeated in Germany, he projected the resignation, the frustration, the obscenity, the bitterness, and the sordidness of the times.[19]

For two years (1919-1921), Brecht served as the drama critic for the leftist newspaper, Volkswille, the major voice for the Independent Socialist Party; his brash, harsh, and scathing remarks gained him many new enemies. He was particularly negative when commenting on the quality of the local

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[17] Ibid., p. 71. [18] Ibid. p. 77. [19] Ibid., p. 81.

efforts at theatre, citing their lack of imagination, their poor utilization of actors, their inefficient technical equipment, and especially the opportunism and the timidity of the artistic managers.[20]

Munich in the early twenties, of course, was a gathering place for many noteworthy figures in literature and the arts. At the Cafe Stephanie, Brecht met many of them, including Lion Feuchtwanger, a leading novelist and playwright, and Frank Wedekind. Both of these men were to play major roles in Brecht's life. He commuted between Munich and Augsburg, where he stayed in his parents' home in order to have a quiet place to write without distraction until his mother's death in 1920. At that time Brecht severed his ties in Augsburg and moved permanently to Munich. In the smoke-filled cafes and taverns, while he accompanied him self on the guitar, Brecht liked to sing even though his voice was not first-rate, and he recited his own poems in a thin, high-pitched, strident voice. When he became a favorite of the tavern crowds, he was invited to become a member of a troupe of actors who performed in cabarets in and around Munich. Named "The Laughing Cellar," the troupe was led by Karl Valentin, an actor who was considered a legend by his contemporaries but is hardly known today. Noted for his skits, monologues, songs, comic interludes, and mimes in the style of Charlie

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[20] Ibid., p. 91.

Chaplin, Valentin composed songs, wrote poems, and strongly influenced Brecht's works. It was during this time that Brecht began to use the term "gestus" to describe the "totality of the imitations of the 'unheroic heroes' of the sketches" written by Valentin.[21]

Also during this "cabaret" period, Brecht was reading extensively in the works of the expressionistic poets and playwrights. He quickly came to be dissatisfied with expressionism. Along with several literary figures, he felt the expressionists were not recognizing the dire potential of the riotous and shattering events taking place outside the building. Yet even though Brecht did not agree with expressionistic concepts of theatre, he was fond of the structure and language used by Frank Wedekind, with whom he shared many characteristics of personality and artistic philosophy. Like Wedekind, Brecht was an actor, a poet, a playwright, and a singer who composed his own accompaniment. Both men held the literary conventions of the day in contempt, fit only for their satirical wrath, yet were capable of compassionate expressions, especially for the downtrodden and displaced; they were haunted by the evidence of man's inhumanity to man, and by the necessity of a struggle for survival. Brecht also identified completely with Wedekind's distinctive use of language, particularly a racy vernacular.

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[21] Ibid., p. 65.

Similarities with Wedekind's dramatic structure and language were thus evident in many of Brecht's plays. Accepting a challenge to match the efforts of the expressionist playwrights who were espousing views varying from pacificism to post-Romanticism to dreamers of the past, Brecht was inspired by Hanns Johst's The Lonely One. Derived from the life of a poet-playwright named Christian Grabbe, this woeful story of a prideful, nationalistic anti-Semite who died insane became Baal. Brecht's first play was a mocking piece of theatrical devices, plus "a considerable amount of drunken revelry, sexual conquest, and bawdry."[22] Thus, it was a potent representative of the nihilism that characterized Brecht's thinking in his pre-Communist days. Because Brecht knew his brutal story of anti-social behavior would rarely be produced, he wrote another play, Spartakus, about a soldier who returns from the war and becomes involved with the "Spartakus" uprising in Berlin. Brecht took the script to Feuchtwanger, who had become a close friend, and had him revise the play. The new title was Drums in the Night, and four years later it became Brecht's first success.

In 1922, after the publication of Baal and Drums in the Night, Brecht was awarded the Kleist Prize, which was given annually in Germany to the best young playwright. Basking in

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[22]Oscar G. Brockett and Robert R. Findlay, Century of Innovation: A History of European and American Theatre and Drama Since 1870 (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1973), p. 414.

the fame he received by winning the Kleist, Brecht wrote In the Jungle of the Cities, which was considered one of his most difficult plays and one of the most powerful statements of his nihilistic period, and The Life of Edward II of England, which was adapted from Christopher Marlowe's classic and followed the original plot closely. Nevertheless, the unusual form Brecht chose and the language he used made the play seem a new work. Brecht himself directed the first production in March, 1924; it was the first performance staged in the new epic theatre style.

Berlin and Marxism (1924-1933)

After Hitler's beer-hall putsch in November, 1923, Brecht's life changed drastically. His name was included in the Nazi blacklist of suspicious persons. Unlike most of the people on the infamous list, however, Brecht did not immediately leave Germany. He moved in fact to Berlin, where he had already made friends with Max Reinhardt. The renowned theatrical producer offered Brecht a job as the Dramaturg of the Deutsches Theater.

In 1924, the Berlin Theatre was dominated by three major producers: Max Reinhardt, Leopold Jessner, and Erwin Piscator. Reinhardt was a producer of lavish spectacles in a style all his own, a cross between realism and romanticism. Jessner, working in the Prussian State Theatre, was primarily responsible for highly-stylized expressionistic productions

of the classics built around huge stairways. Piscator was the leftist producer-director of the radical Agitprop (for agitator-propaganda) Theatre. He regarded the stage primarily as an instrument for instructing, rallying, and mobilizing the masses.[23] Using many forms of technical presentation--slides, photographs, newsreels, and slogans--he presented political or sociological backgrounds to his plays, while a propaganda lesson was spoken or sung by choruses on the stage or in the auditorium. Piscator called his theatre "epic" and meant it to be totally unlike the "well-made play" of the conventional theatre. The result was a "kind of illustrated lecture or newspaper report on a political or social theme, loosely constructed in the shape of a serious revue, a sequence of musical numbers, sketches, film, and declamation, sometimes linked by one or several narrators."[24]

Throughout these "first Berlin years," Brecht maintained the attitude, appearance, and activity of a literary "enfant terrible." Arguments, scandals, accusations, and counter-accusations blended into an angry life style. Accused of plagiarism on more than one occasion, Brecht always had an explanation which satisfied him but rarely placated his accusers. When he began to keep company with boxers and racing cyclists, and even preceded the showing of

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[23]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 26.

[24]Ibid.

the film of the Dempsey-Tunney fight by having one of his poems read by Fritz Kortner, a famous actor, Brecht was ignored by Berlin's intellectuals.

Yet Brecht enjoyed the scandals he caused. He could not tolerate the polite aesthetic atmosphere of educated and respectable society, and he wanted the theatre to become more like a sports arena. To that end, despite confrontations, scandals, and other time-wasting activities, Brecht worked with an energy that was described as astounding. He wrote short stories, finished a comedy entitled Man Equals Man, which contained elementary concepts of "social consciousness and didacticism that would characterize his work thereafter,"[25] put together a revue for Max Reinhardt, drafted a novel, and began a play about the machinations of wheat speculators in the Chicago grain market. This last work became St. Joan of the Stockyards.[26]

In early 1926, Brecht began to study Marxism. Piscator had developed Brecht's interest in the revolutionary theories of the Communists, and he took classes in political science and economics. After Man Equals Man opened, he submerged himself in Das Kapital and attended lectures by Karl Korsch, one of the most important Marxist thinkers and theoreticians of his generation. Courses at the Karl Marx Arbeiterschule

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[25]Brockett and Findlay, p. 414.

[26]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 34.

and lengthy discussions in the coffee houses of Berlin increased Brecht's understanding of the principles of communism, and his writings increasingly mirrored the teachings of Marx and Lenin. He began to speak about the need for a new theatre that would complement the "new type of man" which he had described in the discussions of Man Equals Man. This new type of being was one who gained strength as he lost his individuality and became a part of the masses.[27]

During the time of his encounter with communism, Brecht first met Kurt Weill, a young composer who became a close friend and collaborator. Weill was a member of a musical revolution in Germany which was called Neue Musik.[28] Advocating a "new matter-of-factness" in music, the movement rebelled against composers like Richard Wagner, Gustav Mahler, and Richard Strauss, who had composed music of such complexity it could be played only by highly accomplished professionals in recital halls and opera houses, and thus was removed from the experiences of daily life.[29] Other composers besides Weill in the Neue Musik movement were Hanns Eisler, Paul Dessau, Rudolf Wagner-Regeny, and Paul Hindemith, who was the leading spokesman for the group and the manager of the annual festival where the new music was first performed.[30]

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[27] Ewen, p. 165.

[28] Brockett and Findlay, p. 415.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., p. 416.

In 1927, the festival moved to Baden-Baden, where Brecht was asked to stage some of the productions and to present some of his own works. As they worked together, Hindemith and Brecht discovered they both wanted to enlighten the masses with their respective art forms. Out of this association grew several "school" operas and didactic musical plays, called Lehrstücke which were featured in the annual festivals. The artistic designs of Hindemith soon clashed with the didactic goals of Brecht, and their collaboration ended after two productions.[31]

Brecht's personal life went through a revolution of its own in 1927-1928. He had married Marianne Zoff in 1922, but since his wife was not involved in theatre and because Brecht's circle of acquaintances and colleagues in the theatre was large and demanding, their marriage suffered greatly until November, 1927, when they were divorced. The following year, Brecht married Helene Weigel, an actress of moderate fame whom Brecht had met while she was performing in one of Arnolt Bronnen's plays. A member of the cast in the premiere performance of Man Equals Man, Helene Brecht was the originator of many of Brecht's roles. More important, she was to remain his constant and energetic supporter and companion through both the many good times and the times of incredible hardship and discomfort which were to come.

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[31] Ibid.

At his first meeting with Kurt Weill, Brecht had recognized a true compatriot in the arts. The first result of their collaboration was to be their most successful work, The Threepenny Opera, drawn from John Gay's eighteenth-century masterpiece, The Beggar's Opera.[32] Gay's work was a satire on grand opera and the ruling classes in England. Brecht transferred the action to the nineteenth century, though the country remained England, and used the play to denounce the hypocrisy and the resignation of the lower classes of society. The whores and thieves in the play became caricatures of middle-class values and mores in Europe (especially in Germany) during the 1920's.

After an arduous rehearsal process and numerous delays for a multitude of reasons, The Threepenny Opera opened on August 31, 1928, in the newly-redecorated Theatre am Schiffbauerdamm in Berlin, where it ran for 400 performances.[33] The production was directed by Erich Engel, with scene designs by Caspar Neher, both of whom were long-time friends and colleagues of Brecht's.[34] Lotte Lenya, who later became Mrs. Kurt Weill, starred in the role of Jenny, and achieved lasting fame for her portrayal. The production was widely

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[32]Ibid., p. 417.

[33]Oscar G. Brockett, History of the Theatre, 3rd ed. (Boston, 1977), p. 512.

[34]Ewen, p. 166.

acclaimed as an instantaneous success, and has remained one of Brecht's most popular works.

With The Threepenny Opera, Brecht and Weill achieved the artistic success they both had been seeking. The music and lyrics, significant with social implications, could be performed by actors rather than the highly-trained musicians and singers required for most musical performances. The apparently conventional but brilliantly original music of Weill combined with the shocking, unconventional, almost brutal character of the dialogue and lyrics of Brecht to produce a substantial example of the theory of verfremdungseffekt, or "alienation," which became the major characteristic of Brecht's writings.[35] The only possible complaint Brecht might have had concerning The Threepenny Opera was that the audiences enjoyed his work too much; in so doing they missed much of "the unmasking of bourgeois ideology."[36]

Then, in March, 1930, German audiences were shocked into horror when The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, the second major collaborative effort of Brecht and Weill, premiered in Leipzig. The play was the outgrowth of an earlier, shorter work entitled Little Mahagonny, which had been produced at the Baden-Baden Festival in July, 1927.[37] The longer work depicted a society of grotesque contrasts so

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[35]Ibid., p. 181.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Bertolt Brecht, The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, translated by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman (Boston, 1976), p. 10.

perverted that neither God nor chance could rescue it from itself. Such an outlook offended most members of the bourgeois audience, and the casual good cheer which had greeted The Threepenny Opera was replaced with screams of denunciation. By December, 1931, when The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny opened in Berlin, German society had changed to such a degree that it was immediately compared to the anarchical conditions of Mahagonny. At the second Berlin performance, approximately one hundred Nazis had to be ejected from the theatre for creating a disturbance when they felt their beloved Berlin was being profaned.

Today The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny is considered a masterpiece that represents Brecht and Weill at their most original. In the years immediately following its controversial opening Brecht began to formulate his theory of epic theatre. The formulation would occupy the rest of his life as he continually altered or refined his concept. Several of Brecht's didactic pieces appeared during this time.

By 1932, political conditions in Germany were explosive. Six million persons were unemployed, inconclusive elections were conducted, and a three-way fight for control of the nation was waged by the Nazis, the Communists, and the Social Democrats. In the Reichstag elections of July, 1932, the Nazis polled fourteen million votes, the Social Democrats eight million, and the Communists five million. Toward the end of the year, the Communists made significant gains in the

Reichstag while the Nazis lost strength. As this situation was developing, Brecht spent much of his time studying political economy. Out of the material he gathered, he wrote St. Joan of the Stockyards, in which he took the classic story of Joan of Arc into the Chicago grain market during a contemporary economic struggle much like the conditions in Germany. Even though the play was set in America, it contained world-wide implications and was particularly significant for Germany. Unfortunately, the play was so controversial it was not performed in a theatre until 1959.

Brecht's last play to be produced in consecutively-staged performances in pre-Hitler Germany was The Mother, a didactic drama that received violent, contradictory reactions from its audiences. Though Brecht reveled in the notoriety he derived from productions such as The Mother, he was becoming increasingly aware of the dangers building up for him in Germany.

As the economic and political crisis deepened and the theatre in Germany faced mounting financial woes, some theatrical managers changed their production concepts to reduce controversy and to cut their expenses. Political pressure from the rightists had increased, and the popularity of Brecht and his work created more problems for him. Performances of his plays were occasionally interrupted and sometimes even banned, ostensibly for the threats they carried against the ruling Nazi party. When the power of the right

increased and many of Brecht's co-workers and friends became members of the Nazi party, he remained adamantly opposed to the pressure. During these difficult times, he wrote some of his bitterest and most despairing poems. Though many of them could not be made public at the time, they appeared in Germany after Brecht had gone into exile. Having been smuggled back into the nation by the German underground,[38] the poems served well as morale-builders. Brecht's last play to be written before he left Germany was an anti-Hitler comedy entitled The Round Heads and the Peaked Heads, which Brecht classified as "an atrocity story."[39] In this, one of the most incisive and perceptive of his plays, Brecht used a grotesque fable to reduce Hitler's racial theories almost to the level of absurdity.[40]

On February 28, 1933, the day after the Reichstag fire, Brecht and his family escaped from Berlin with other artists of the left and fled to Vienna.[41] On May 10, the books and papers of Brecht and other writers, both German and non-German, were burned. For the next fourteen years Brecht would not step onto German soil.

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[38]Ewen, p. 286.

[39]John Willett, The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht: A Study from Eight Aspects (New York, 1968), p. 42.

[40]John Gassner, "A Modern Style of Theatre," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXVIII (February, 1952), p. 66.

[41]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 64.

Wanderings of an Exile (1933-1941)

In the days after February, 1933, those artists and literary figures who remained in Hitler's Germany, either voluntarily or involuntarily, fell victims to torture, imprisonment, and death.[42] Thousands of men and women, whether public leaders or private citizens, shared martyrdom in one of Germany's darkest times. Some who were fortunate enough to escape discovered an inability to endure the strain of exile and took their own lives. For others each day became just a matter of survival. The terrors they had left in their hometowns pursued them from country to country and from city to city. Some were caught or slain on the spot; others, mercifully, were just a step or two ahead of the enemy.[43] Even then, their reception in foreign lands often varied from suspicion and coldness to warmth and open-arms. A lack of funds and a language barrier presented problems to some which were almost insurmountable. Worst of all, separation from loved ones left behind brought many anxious days and restless nights.

Brecht, however, was one of the more fortunate ones. His wife, Helene Weigel, and their two children, Stefan and Barbara, were with him, and he was not limited by a shortage of funds. He had many open-hearted, helpful friends who welcomed the family with understanding and hospitality.

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[42] Ewen, p. 291.

[43] Ibid., p. 292.

Never known for their expensive tastes or high standard of living, Brecht and his family were minimal problems for their hosts and could be satisfied with less than they had in their home. Brecht used the challenge of the trying times to grow in understanding, in moral and mental strength, and in his ability as a writer. During these years of nomadic exile, he produced some of his greatest works.

Within the first few weeks after their departure from Germany, Brecht and his family moved from Vienna to Prague and then to Zurich, where they met some close friends from Germany and rested briefly in Carona, an idyllic town in the Swiss Ticino area. From Switzerland they traveled to Sanary-sur-Mer in Southern France, where Brecht met many German writers and intellectuals who had gathered to discuss the past, present, and future of Germany. This meeting proved to be the last time Brecht saw many of those in attendance. Shortly after they met, many were captured and herded into concentration camps. Brecht had left the area and moved to Paris, however, where he remained for only a few weeks. When a Danish writer offered him refuge, Brecht moved with his family to a group of small islands off the coast of Denmark, where a clan of literary and intellectual refugees lived. A stable in the rear of their small home provided Brecht with his first "workroom" since leaving Germany. In the wooden wall over the worktable he had built in the stable, Brecht

carved the words "Truth is concrete."[44] As he continued his life of exile, he determined that he would do what he could to speak truth to the world at large and, if possible, to his countrymen in Germany.[45]

Even on the island, the refugees were not totally free of harassment. The police kept a watchful eye on them, and the director of the police forces in Copenhagen maintained a constant communication with police officials in Berlin. The Danish government, however, refused all attempts by the German government to extradite the political refugees, especially Brecht.

While others in his group were succumbing to pessimism, cynicism, and hopelessness, Brecht found it possible to endure with more grace because of a realistic sense of humor which permitted him to maintain a healthy perspective on the situation. Continuing to believe that victory would come through the strength of the people's will, for his own mental health and for the morale of the refugees, Brecht secured the services of actors and directors to present his plays in performances which would be to his satisfaction. The group performed in any available theatre, and as the peril of their lives increased, the plays became an effective source of diversion and strength.

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[44]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 66.

[45]Ewen, p. 295.

The increasing problems in Germany, which Brecht knew about from daily radio broadcasts, caused Brecht, his family, and his friends much concern. The successes and defeats of the people in Germany who were resisting the spread of Marxism caused the exiles to feel both pride and despair. Yet Brecht was fully aware that he might have to relocate on very short notice. By 1937, all of Europe appeared to be retreating from the relentless march of the German armies, and Hitler was eliminating all who stood in opposition to him. Brecht realized that war on a global basis was imminent and unavoidable. His enormous despair, however, led him to compose some of his most widely-acclaimed works. These scripts were devoid of the cynical nihilism and the abrasive revolutionary doctrine of his earlier years and revealed a talent both undiminished and considerably more matured than it had been during the Berlin years. The masterpieces were Galileo, The Good Woman of Setzuan, and Mother Courage and Her Children.

In April, 1939, Brecht and his group of itinerants fled to Sweden. The war began in September, and when the invasion of Denmark and Norway occurred in the spring of 1940, Brecht and his troupe moved to Helsinki, Finland, where the Russo-Finnish War had just ended with Russia the victor. After a year in Finland, however, Brecht decided to emigrate to the United States. In order to introduce himself to the American people and to overcome the barriers he felt he might

encounter in the American theatre, he wrote The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, a play which described the rise to power of Hitler in the milieu of the Chicago underworld.[46] In May, 1941, an immigration visa was issued to Brecht, his family, and two other members of the group. They departed from Helsinki and traveled first to Moscow, where they boarded the Siberian Express to get to Vladivostok. Ten days after the Brecht group had boarded a Swedish ship for America, the German armies attacked Russia, and Finland entered the war as an ally of Germany.[47]

After a long voyage through the Sea of Japan to Manila, which was to fall to the Japanese within a few months, Brecht and his family arrived in San Pedro, the port of Los Angeles, California, on July 21, 1941.

The Exiles in America (1941-1947)

The six years of life in America were relatively unproductive for Brecht.[48] He and his family settled first in Santa Monica, California, where many European writer-refugees had gathered to wait out the war in Europe. Included in this group were Lion Feuchtwanger, his friend and collaborator, Hanns Eisler, the composer of some of Brecht's music, and

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[46]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 71.

[47]Ibid., p. 72.

[48]Ulrich Weisstein, "Brecht in America: A Preliminary Survey," Modern Language Notes, LXXVIII (October, 1963), pp. 374-375.

Berthold Viertel, an Austrian poet and producer whom Brecht had met a few years earlier in Vienna.

Brecht's plans for success on the American stage did not materialize as he had hoped. To American audiences, the gangsters in The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui were too far removed from Hitler for the analogy to have any impact. In fact, there was little interest in performing a play which most people found to be unusual to an extreme.[49] When Brecht concluded there was only a slim chance of gaining any kind of attention in the American theatre, he began to look for ideas which could be developed into film plots. Several studios were filming stories of the underground activities in Occupied Europe, and Brecht became involved in some of these projects.[50] He and Feuchtwanger planned a film describing the struggle in Occupied France, using the Joan of Arc story as the basis for the plot; this work became The Visions of Simone Machard, one of Brecht's most sensitive plays. Then he sold a story concerning the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, the General of Police for the Third Reich who was responsible for the persecution and death of hundreds of Czechoslovakian citizens. By the time the film was completed, however, the script had been so altered that Brecht had his name removed from the credits.[51]

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[49]Ewen, p. 374.

[50]Ibid., pp. 385-386.

[51]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 73.

During these early years in America, Brecht became acquainted with many well-known figures in the arts and literature. Chief among them were W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, Aldous Huxley, Charlie Chaplin, and Charles Laughton. Despite the new friends and opportunities in America, Brecht was unhappy. He felt depressed and repulsed by the glitter of Hollywood and its environs. Out of these days of low spirits, just as he had done in Denmark, Brecht wrote one of his finest plays, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, and other works of varying types and lengths.[52]

Now a man in his middle forties, Brecht had mellowed considerably. His clothing remained essentially the same, however, except that now he wore trousers and jackets of blue denim, with open-collared shirts and no ties. His ever-present cigars were five-cent American brands that were just as strong and malodorous as his German cigars had been. He was never clean-shaven, and his hair was never given any particular care or grooming.

Though Brecht became an active leader in German-speaking circles in the Hollywood area, he established few friendships with the denizens of the film and theatre world; Charlie Chaplin and Charles Laughton, however, became close friends and associates. Many of the actors Brecht met were under the influence of Stanislavski's theories of acting,

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[52]Ibid., pp. 73-74.

which Brecht detested, and he refused to become overly involved with them.

During this time, however, Brecht met Eric Bentley, the professor and author who was to conduct a long, intensive campaign to win recognition for Brecht in the English-speaking world.[53] Over the years Bentley translated eleven of Brecht's plays: Baal, The Elephant Calf, Man Equals Man, In the Jungle of the Cities, The Decision, Mother Courage and Her Children, The Threepenny Opera, The Exception and the Rule, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Good Woman of Setzuan, and The Private Life of the Master Race. In 1942, Max Reinhardt, another artistic refugee from Germany, and at one time Brecht's employer in Berlin, planned a production of The Private Life of the Master Race, which contained a series of short, unconnected scenes that depicted the environment from which the German troops had come to destroy Europe. Though Reinhardt's plans never materialized, Bentley's translation of the work was first performed in 1944 at Black Mountain College in North Carolina.[54]

Although this production began Brecht's active career in the academic theatre in the United States while, relatively speaking, the commercial theatres simultaneously ignored him, as more of his plays were translated and produced in America, Brecht's outlook on life improved significantly. Bentley's

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[53]Weisstein, "Brecht in America," p. 375. [54]Ibid.

translations of The Caucasian Chalk Circle and The Good Woman of Setzuan met with success, and Brecht himself struggled with an English version of Galileo for a production starring Charles Laughton in the title role. A few years earlier, Orson Welles and Mike Todd had planned a production of Galileo with Laughton, but the two giants of the entertainment industry had clashed over artistic matters, specifically the costuming and the properties to be used in the film, and the plan had been dropped. Laughton continued to be interested in the project, however, and two of his playwright friends worked on an acting version from Brecht's original script. In the meantime, Brecht had begun his own reworking, and soon Laughton halted the work of his two friends, and began to collaborate with Brecht. Brecht later described the experience as "an almost miraculous process of collaboration through mutual inspiration."[55]

Brecht considered the production of Galileo as his first real opportunity in the American theatre. Having failed in all of his former efforts, he now had a major star of stage and screen interested in trying to launch his American career. One major contributing factor to the situation was the fact that Galileo was a great play and, with the dropping of the first atomic bomb, a highly topical one as well. The

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[55]Bertolt Brecht, "Aufbau einer Rolle: Laughton's 'Galileo,'" translated and cited in Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 78.

major theme of Galileo was the scientist's responsibility to society.[56]

Finally, after years of work on the script and months of rehearsal, Galileo was premiered at the Coronet Theatre in Beverly Hills, California, on July 30, 1947. Though Laughton was praised for his performance, the play was received coolly by the press and the public. Audiences, unprepared for this new kind of dramatic presentation, had come expecting suspenseful and emotional involvement. Despite the somewhat negative response in Los Angeles, Laughton planned to take the production to New York.[57]

At this time, however, Brecht had become so disheartened by the sequence of events in America that he began to think of returning to Europe. Rebuffed by the American commercial theatre and its audiences, Brecht also found that American society was becoming more and more uncomfortable for people with known leftist leanings.[58] The cold war was beginning to heat up, and subversion was being suspected everywhere, including in Hollywood. In September, 1947, a scene from real life occurred with such irony and ineptitude that it could easily have been written by Brecht himself. Subpoenaed to appear before the United States House Committee on Un-American Activities, Brecht found that his friends and

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[56]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 79.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid.

colleagues shuddered at the dangers in such an ordeal for Brecht, who still spoke only broken English. Though his friends attempted to persuade him not to respond, however, Brecht was eager to challenge the committee.

The transcript of the hearing at which Brecht was questioned is a study in puzzling ignorance on the part of the committee versus intentionally misleading statements by Brecht concerning his works, which were almost totally unknown to the committee. Because the committee did not understand German, a translator was present to facilitate the progress of the hearing. Awkward, clumsy exchanges and disorganized questions without direct answers characterized the morning's activities. Not permitted to read a carefully prepared statement concerning his activities, Brecht was asked only about his involvement with the Communist party.[59] No one was interested in his struggles with the Nazis during the thirties. Toward the end of the hearing, some of Brecht's poems were read for the committee. When he claimed they were "very different" from his original works, he was not given the opportunity to disclose any of the differences. After receiving a commendation for responding to the subpoena and cooperating with the committee, Brecht was given his leave. He was amused by the whole episode, feeling a degree of success at the manner in which the hearing had been conducted,

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[59]Ewen, pp. 417-418.

but he was glad he already had tickets for his return with his family to Europe.[60]

Back Home to Europe (1947-1956)

Brecht and his family completed their circuit of the world when they returned to Europe the day after he appeared before the congressional committee, October 31, 1947. Because of the devastation from the war in Germany, Brecht was not particularly anxious to return to his homeland; he settled first in Zurich. From there he could observe the conditions in both Germany and Austria, and the German-speaking theatre groups in Zurich could provide a way for Brecht to begin writing. In addition, a number of intellectuals from central Europe lived there. When Brecht arrived the Zurich Schauspielhaus was reviving its production of Mother Courage and Her Children. In February, 1948, the Municipal Theatre at Chur invited Brecht to stage his adaptation of Sophocles' Antigone. Brecht's long-time friend, Caspar Neher, designed the scenery, and Helene Weigel played the title role. The performance was a notable demonstration of the production style that would thereafter be known as "Brechtian."[61]

Though Antigone was the high point of Brecht's stay in Switzerland, and brought him considerable prestige, the

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[60]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 84.

[61]Ewen, p. 428.

Swiss government began to pressure him because of his "stateless" condition. As the pressure increased past annoyance to the remedy-required stage, Brecht received an invitation to work at the Salzburg Festivals. Gottfried von Einem, the musical director at Salzburg, was struggling with the problems of reviving the Festivals after the war. Believing that Brecht and his new theatrical spirit would be of particular benefit, von Einem began the process of getting the necessary citizenship papers from the Austrian government. Passports were arranged, and Brecht and his family traveled to Salzburg for production conferences.

Ambitious plans were begun for Mother Courage and Her Children, Antigone, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, and in anticipation of the Goethe centennial, the complete Faust. Regrettably, the productions were never realized because the wheels of the bureaucracy moved so slowly; two years were required to obtain Brecht's citizenship papers. Even after the papers were issued, the uproar created by the public announcement effectively shut off the planning of the Salzburg project.[62] Brecht, however, now possessed citizenship papers and passports from a western country.

One of the literary casualties of the Salzburg problems was an unfinished work, The Salzburg Dance of Death, which was in preparation while Brecht was waiting for his

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[62] Ibid., p. 432.

citizenship papers. This play was to be a modern counterpart of the historic and honored English morality play, Everyman, which had been a regular production at the Salzburg Festivals in the pre-Hitler days. Though Brecht continued working on the script until 1951, it was never finished.[63]

In 1948, Brecht began writing his last play, The Days of the Commune. The first draft of the work was finished in 1949, but the play was not performed until after his death in 1956, because Brecht never finished the revision. Considered by some critics to be the nearest Brecht came to tragedy in the traditional sense, the play dramatized the struggle between the French National Guard and the lower classes in Paris during the winter of 1871. Since the play was left incomplete, it was hard to tell what Brecht might have been thinking about. It could be conjectured that he might have been extending a warning to the Socialist states, especially East Germany, that the "cold war" could develop into an actual war.[64]

An historic event for Brecht and his family occurred in 1948, when they were invited to return to East Berlin. Brecht's play, Fear and Misery in the Third Reich, had been impressively performed at the Deutsches Theatre. Supportive of Brecht's work, the leftist press stated that the new East German state should take up the philosophy expressed by Brecht.[65] Thus welcomed back to East Berlin, Brecht was

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[63]Ibid., p. 433. [64]Ibid., p. 439. [65]Ibid., p. 442.

given the Stadttheatre, where he began to work on a production of Mother Courage and Her Children. The production opened in January, 1949, and was triumphantly received. Moving his entire family's belongings to East Berlin occupied much of Brecht's time until the fall of 1949. In November, Brecht received authority to found his own theatre company, the Berliner Ensemble, which opened with a production of Herr Puntila and His Man Matti.[66]

On October 7, 1949, the government of East Germany became known as the German Democratic Republic.[67] The division of Germany between East and West was now solidly established, but Brecht was not disturbed because he had been denied residence in West Germany. Though he had hoped to be the poet to speak for all Germany, when the division was made, he preferred East Germany. The West German area, he felt, was to be a reconstruction project sponsored by American dollars, and a showplace for the western form of democracy. He was also concerned that many of the former Nazi leaders, in high and low places, were being restored to their previous positions.[68]

On both sides of the lines, Brecht was horrified by the destruction he saw. The Reichstag buildings had been reduced to a pile of rubble, the streets were covered by huge

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[66]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 94.

[67]Ewen, p. 443.

[68]Ibid.

mountains of debris, and pedestrians were rummaging through piles of bricks to find sufficient quantities for rebuilding their homes. Natural resources, such as oil and coal, were almost non-existent. The task of reeducating the population was enormous, but the government spared no expense in this effort. Theatres, opera houses, schools, and universities received substantial monetary support.[69] The greatest blessing for this process, however, lay in the fact that many of the exiled writers and intellectuals who had returned to the East German Sector provided talents to the reeducation that could not be purchased.

Brecht was now happier than at any previous moment of his professional life. He and numerous associates from the past were again working together in their own theatre. Noted stage designers and performers were congregating around the Berliner Ensemble, and the younger aspiring actors and actresses were eager to study and learn with Brecht and his wife.

Brecht and Weigel had two primary goals: to rebuild the repertory that had been devastated by the Nazi regime and to develop a repertory of new works that would correspond to the needs of the society at that time.[70] Contemporary social and economic problems were the focus of Brecht's writing.

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[69] Ibid., p. 444.

[70] Ibid., p. 445.

The continued success of the Berliner Ensemble, in their performances at the Deutsches Theatre and the Stadttheatre, culminated in many tours throughout East Germany during the years from 1950 to 1953. East Berlin remained the theatre group's home base, and in 1954, the Theatre am Schiffbauerdamm, where Brecht had enjoyed some of his most successful experiences in the twenties, became the permanent home for the troupe.[71]

The theatre had been modernized and improved for Brecht, who was so grateful to the technicians that he wrote a letter in which he asked them to remind him of the debt he owed them if and when he should become too rude during rehearsals. The technicians, some of whom had been involved in Brecht's productions before the war, painted that relevant statement from the letter on a large banner, and suspended it in the flies above the stage, to be lowered for Brecht to see should he ever become too angry. The sign was never used.[72]

Brecht had now achieved one of his greatest ambitions, to serve as the master of his own company and to be in charge of all the artistic decisions. The company grew to a total of more than 250 people, including actors, designers, directors, script supervisors, mechanics, musicians, and scene painters. New productions were rehearsed for three to five

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[71]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 97.

[72]Ibid., pp. 97-98.

months.[73] He could indulge in his habit of trying out every possible device in rehearsals before adopting the one he preferred. His reputation as one of the greatest directors in the world was confirmed in the few remaining years of his life. Tours to Paris in 1954 and 1955, with productions of Mother Courage and Her Children and The Caucasian Chalk Circle, respectively, enhanced the fame of Brecht and his Berliner Ensemble throughout Western Europe.

Many honors and awards were bestowed on Brecht and his troupe, but in spite of these external blessings from the government, not all was proceeding smoothly between Brecht and the East German Communist authorities. The longsuffering and downtrodden population rose up against their leaders in June, 1953, and the bureaucratic mishandling of the situation met with disdain and disapproval from Brecht. The clash he witnessed between the reality of the Communist state and the ideal state he had believed in presented Brecht with a continuous conflict of conscience. He began to encounter attempts at censorship and government control. Only when he threatened to air the whole matter before the World Peace Council was there any alleviation of the situation by the people who were in control.[74]

In the last eighteen months of his life, Brecht was embroiled in controversy with the owners of a film company

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[73] Ibid., p. 98.

[74] Ibid., p. 99.

which was producing a screen version of Mother Courage and Her Children. To increase the drawing power of the film outside East Germany, the directors intended to use actors and actresses who were well-known in the West. Brecht insisted that the Berliner Ensemble performers be used, with Helene Weigel starring in the title role. Work was temporarily suspended; they resumed only to become again entangled in a three-sided controversy: Brecht, who still wanted Helene Weigel for the title role, clashed with the directors, who wanted a more popular actress for the Western audiences, and the party authorities, who were insisting on various changes in the script to bring it into closer conformity with the current political philosophies.[75] The arguments became so heated, and Brecht became such a nuisance, that finally he was banned from the studios where the film was being shot. For a time, the overbearing controversy led to the film's being abandoned. Despite the problems, however, Brecht maintained allegiance to East Germany, even though the government did not always support him.[76]

During these years of his greatest success, Brecht was looking tired and worn. The poems written during these years reflect a deep sense of guilt coupled with a nostalgia for the times of his youth in Augsburg. His creative powers ebbed, and he spent most of his time adapting existing plays

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[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., pp. 100-101.

rather than trying to write original works. To help restore his energy and well-being, Brecht took every opportunity to travel to the West and particularly enjoyed frequent visits to Paris. His Austrian passport proved to be a valuable possession.

In the spring of 1955, Brecht fell seriously ill with a heart condition. Weakened but still alert, he became obsessed with forebodings of death. He spoke of buying a home on Lake Geneva in Switzerland for his retirement. Then, toward the end of 1955, he came into conflict with the authorities once again when he was refused permission to publish a series of short poems, with accompanying photographs, dealing with various aspects and problems of World War II. These were his most satiric verses, filled with pacificism and bitterness against war and warmongers. After weeks of wrangling, he was victorious and the works were published.

Brecht's health became a matter of frequent concern in the early part of 1956. The number of contacts with his friends and associates began declining, and when they did occur, the subjects of death and dying were often included in the conversations. He did feel well enough to travel to Milan to see performances of The Threepenny Opera, which received an outstanding response from the public.[77]

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[77]Ewen, pp. 485-486.

The plans for the Berliner Ensemble during 1956 were extensive and exciting. A new staging of Galileo was in preparation; The Days of the Commune was waiting production in the Municipal Theatre in Karl-Marx Stadt; the Berliner Ensemble was to make its first visit to England in August. Brecht's desk was loaded with notes on planning, projects, and sketches, and with folders full of notes, sayings, and collections that all indicated the directions for the future of the Ensemble. A great year was being planned.

The year did not proceed as planned, however. Soon after his return from Italy, while Brecht was rehearsing the new production of Galileo, improvising, extemporizing, and bursting with enthusiasm and fresh ideas on design, colors, and costumes, he became ill and was confined to the hospital with a serious virus attack. While he was recuperating at home, he continued to plan for the forthcoming visit to England; through memoranda, he supervised the preparation of the company for the English audiences.

On August 10, he went to his theatre for the last time. Three days later he collapsed, critically ill, and near midnight on August 14, 1956, he died of a coronary thrombosis. He was buried in a cemetery near his home, beneath a stone which, in accordance with his wishes, bore the simple inscription "Brecht."

Though Bertolt Brecht has been dead for twenty-seven years, he is more widely known today than he ever was during

his lifetime. His plays have appeared in the repertories of theatre companies around the world. In German-speaking areas particularly, Brecht has been ranked with Shakespeare, Goethe, and Schiller in the number of performances. In the Socialist countries, and even in the Soviet Union, Brecht has served to revive deteriorated theatre conditions into the preeminence they had once enjoyed.

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[78] Ibid., p. 490.

CHAPTER III

THE DRAMATIC ART OF BERTOLT BRECHT

Illusion has been a goal of theatre artists since the Renaissance. By the eighteenth century, enhanced semblances of nature came to dominate all forms of theatre. Until 1850, designers emphasized the loveliness of nature and picturesque locales, with harmonious colors and comfortable contrasts.[1] Then, as critics began to demand a more objective depiction of life, the goal became realistic illusion.

At first the closest playwrights could come to this illusionistic ideal was Eugène Scribe's "well-made play." In 1870, Henrik Ibsen joined his poetic gifts and the burgeoning new science of psychology to Scribe's formula. Non-realistic devices like asides and soliloquies were discarded, and emphasis was placed on the personality of each character, whose internal psychological motivations rather than external attributes were to be portrayed.

This preference for realism or naturalism in the theatre spread throughout Europe. Otto Brahm and Gerhard Hauptmann at the Freie Bühne in Berlin paved the way for the establish ment of the "people's theatre" and the "workers' theatre"

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[1]Oscar G. Brockett, History of the Theatre (Boston, 1977), p. 418.

movements of the late nineteenth century.[2] Both of these movements were to play major roles in Brecht's artistic development. Another important influence on Brecht's work was George Bernard Shaw in England, though his form of realism was somewhat different from that of other playwrights. His plays were noted for their lack of objective viewpoint and for comic devices and stories which illustrated or pleaded for a special point of view.[3]

Whatever the outlook portrayed, however, the idea prevailed that a theatrical production should use innovative scenic techniques and devices to create historically accurate scenes. After 1880, most visual designs sought to achieve the decor and costumes that were authentic for the period involved in the story. In the Duchy of Saxe-Meiningen, Georg II insisted on productions that were well rehearsed; emphasized authenticity of scenery, costumes, and properties; and achieved startling effective scenes with crowds and smaller ensembles. The Court Theatre's productions influenced the realism of theatrical efforts from Russia to England.[4]

The theatre of illusion became a dominant factor in European music through the work and influence of Richard

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[2] Ibid., p. 473.

[3] A. C. Ward, "George Bernard Shaw," The Oxford Companion to the Theatre, edited by Phyllis Hartnoll (London, 1967), p. 879.

[4] Brockett, pp. 448-449.

Wagner. Although he disliked realism in the theatre and felt drama "should seek to portray an ideal world through the expression of the inner impulses and aspirations of the community as embodied in its racial myths," Wagner objected to spoken drama.[5] It lacked the consistency of performance which musical drama, as dictated by the dramatist-composer, could achieve. Yet Wagner considered total illusion the goal of all theatrical experiences. He was determined to involve the emotions of the audience in the world of the production.

The illusionistic theatre was not to exist without challenge. The expressionists, for example, objected to naturalism's tendency to focus on external details and sought "to project human emotions and attitudes into all objects and to seek truth in man's spiritual qualities rather than in external appearances."[6]

Expressionistic plays were characterized by distortion of line, color, and speech, and were constructed in an episodic manner, unified by a central theme or idea, which occasionally indicated the possibility of striving toward an improved societal condition. As a result of World War I, the emphasis in expressionistic drama changed from personal goals and ambitions to "warnings of impending universal catastrophe

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[5]Oscar G. Brockett and Robert R. Findlay, Century of Innovation: A History of European and American Theatre and Drama Since 1870 (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1973), p. 29.

[6]Brockett, p. 508.

or pleas for the reformation of man and society."[7] Following the War, expressionism flourished in Germany until 1924, when its demise was caused by a shift from optimism to pessimism, disappointment, and disillusion. Scene designers for the expressionistic dramas, led by Leopold Jessner, utilized stairways and risers as basic elements of their designs. The symbolic nature of the designs was extended into the construction of the costumes and properties using intense colors which changed as the situation on stage changed.[8]

Some of the features of expressionism were combined with the neo-realism of the early 1920's to create the concept of an epic theatre with intense political awareness. The power of drama as a political weapon for the control of society and the instigation of specific programs was recognized. Erwin Piscator, an actor who was involved in Berlin politics during the years leading to World War I, became the head of the Proletarian Theatre. Its manifesto described several characteristics of Epic Theatre.

(1) Drama must be subordinated to revolutionary ends, even if this means altering scripts.

(2) Production styles should be simple and direct so that the revolutionary aims remain clear to all.

(3) New techniques should be used only insofar as they help to convey meaning.

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[7] Ibid., p. 509.

[8] Ibid., p. 511.

(4) Productions should represent a collective effort of all workers.

(5) Actors should be recruited from the working class rather than being a separate professional group.[9]

The Proletarian Theatre used scenery that demonstrated and explained the story of the play rather than representing a specific locale. Painted drops, screens, projections, treadmills, and simple pieces of symbolic scenery proclaimed the messages of the epic theatre productions to their audiences. When Hitler rose to power, Piscator lost his theatre, left Germany in 1933, and moved to America in 1939.[10] With the departure of Piscator to America, Brecht became the leading exponent of the epic theatre form in Europe.

Although Piscator and Brecht shared the desire to force their audiences to think and act, they approached this goal differently. Brecht sought to use history as a learning source for the present; Piscator used contemporary subjects and conditions as his sources.[11] Where Piscator built his productions to arouse feelings and emotional responses in his audiences, Brecht strove to keep his audiences "alienated" from the stage so their thinking could be facilitated. Brecht's scene designs contained few details and lacked

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[9]Brockett and Findlay, p. 407.

[10]Erwin Piscator, The Political Theatre, A History, 1914-1929 (New York, 1978), p. 305.

[11]Brockett and Findlay, p. 412.

completion, but Piscator emphasized more complex devices of technical theatre. In summary, Piscator's theatre belonged to the director, Brecht's to the playwright.[12]

This chapter will examine eight topics related to the dramatic art of Bertolt Brecht: Brecht and the epic theatre, Brecht and alienation, alienation in the play's structure, songs and music, the language of alienation, directing for alienation, alienation in acting, and alienation through technical effects.

Brecht and the Epic Theatre

At the time Brecht began to formulate his concepts of theatrical production, he also became acquainted with the writings of Karl Marx and with the activities of the Communist Party in Germany. He was instructed that the unique and sovereign individual was antiquated and that the "man of the age" was Collective Man. Accepting this tenet of Communism, Brecht believed a dramatic theatre was incapable of presenting such a concept, and the best solution would be a form of theatre which would dispassionately tell its story in a series of vignettes which stressed a central idea.

The answer was to be called "epic theatre." In the notes to Brecht's opera, The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny (1930), he proclaimed that "the Modern Theatre is

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[12] Ibid.

the epic theatre."[13] The style, as already noted, was Erwin Piscator's, and Frank Wedekind, another friend of Brecht's, had already begun writing for this theatre. In fact, Piscator's ideas had been incorporated into many productions by a variety of playwrights. Luigi Pirandello, for example, had introduced an analytic method of acting. In A Short Organum for the Theatre (1949), Brecht decried realism, naturalism, and expressionism for having "degenerated into branches of the bourgeois narcotics business," depicting individual lives which were ingested by the audience.[14] This degeneration resulted in a kind of "cannibalistic drama."[15]

Nor was this style of writing limited to the drama. The Russian composer Igor Stravinsky had written History of a Soldier in an epic operatic style; in France, Paul Claudel collaborated with composer Darius Milhaud to produce Christophe Colombe, an operatic spectacle utilizing a narrator who conversed with the actors and the spectators, symbolic projections of motion picture film, and twenty-eight episodes that retraced the career of the explorer.

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[13]Bertolt Brecht, "The Modern Theatre Is the Epic Theatre," Brecht on Theatre: The Development of An Aesthetic, edited by John Willett (New York, 1964), p. 37.

[14]Bertolt Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," Brecht on Theatre: The Development of An Aesthetic, edited by John Willett (New York, 1964), p. 179.

[15]Keith A. Dickson, Towards Utopia: A Study of Brecht (Oxford, 1978), p. 230.

Brecht became irreversibly associated with these innovative forms when he wrapped them in Marxist philosophies and presented them in a systematized fashion. He thus organized various fashionable trends which were anti-Reinhardt, anti-expressionist, and most importantly, anti-Aristotelian in their outlook.[16] Despite Aristotle's concern for what might have been termed "epic theatre" in The Poetics, there were many contrasts between the drama theory of Aristotle and that of Brecht. It might even be said that as Brecht used the term, "epic theatre" was a misnomer. Early in his thinking, Brecht determined that "narrative" should replace "plot" in the description of tragedy and that each scene, instead of being a part of the whole, should be capable of standing alone. The forward movement of the story would therefore be jerky and irregular, and would not flow in an orderly manner toward a dramatic conclusion. As described by Aristotle, however, an "epic" narrated the story of a single event from the past so that the events exhibited a "beginning, middle, and end." In his notes to The Round Heads and the Pointed Heads, written between 1931 and 1934, Brecht designated that "certain incidents in the play should be treated as self-contained scenes and raised--by means of inscriptions, musical or sound effects, and the actors' methods of playing--

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[16]John Willett, The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht: A Study from Eight Aspects (New York, 1968), p. 169.

above the level of the everyday, the obvious, the expected."[17]

The differences between dramatic, or Aristotelian, theatre and epic theatre were described as follows:

Dramatic Theatre	Epic Theatre
plot	narrative
implicates the spectator in a stage situation	turns the spectator into an observer, but
wears down his capacity for action	arouses his capacity for action
provides him with sensations	forces him to make decisions
experience	picture of the world
spectator is involved in something	he is made to face something
suggestion	argument
instinctive feelings are preserved	brought to the point of recognition
spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience	the spectator stands outside, studies
the human being is taken for granted	the human being is the object of the inquiry
he is unalterable	he is alterable and able to alter
eyes on the finish	eyes on the course
one scene makes another	each scene for itself
growth	montage
linear development	in curves
evolutionary determinism	jumps
man as a fixed point	man as a process
thought determines being	social being determines thought
feeling	reason[18]

[17]Bertolt Brecht, "Notes to 'The Round Heads and the Pointed Heads,'" Brecht on Theatre: The Development of An Aesthetic, edited by John Willett (New York, 1964), p. 101.

[18]Brecht, "The Modern Theatre Is the Epic Theatre," p. 37.

Brecht and Alienation

The key idea in Brecht's theory of epic theatre was verfremdungseffekt, or "alienation." Finding the dramatic theatre of catharsis, empathy, involvement, and illusion unsatisfactory, Brecht discarded illusion because he wanted the audience to recognize what happened on the stage as an actuality from outside the theatre.[19] If possible, this experience should lead the audience to correct the conditions that were being depicted. It was necessary that the audience remain objective so reasoning could lead to understanding and, later, to problem-solving.

> We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself.[20]

What, then, was alienation or "estrangement"? Simply described, it was an act by which the spectator took from an incident or a character that which was self-evident, known, or obvious and thereby became aroused to wonder or curiosity. It was not so much a matter of recognizing or understanding, but observing the familiar, ordinary things of life with an attitude of detachment or unfamiliarity. By mentally retreating from an object, one could examine it anew from a different perspective, notice characteristics which were not

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[19]Henry Adler, "Brecht and After," Drama, LXIII (Winter, 1961), 31.

[20]Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," p. 190.

previously observed and reevaluate its significance to one's own life. When illusory aspects of a production were destroyed and the progress of the action halted, the level of tension in the audience was reduced. Thus emotionally disengaged during the performance, the audience could make an intelligent and objective evaluation of what was seen. Every facet of the production was devised and presented for the purpose of creating this alienation.[21]

It was more than coincidental that Brecht's definition of alienation (verfremdung) was reminiscent of the concept of estrangement (entfremdung) developed as a key idea by Karl Marx. Entfremdung meant "the state of progressive deterioration and oppression into which the human being must fall when he has no share of the means of production controlled by the capitalist system, sees himself degraded to a commodity, and no longer disposes over himself and his life."[22] As defined by Brecht, verfremdung was derived from the Russian word "ostrannenie," which denoted the "transformation of an 'ordinary' or 'automatic' perception into a poetically felt, poetically visionary perception."[23]

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[21]See Brockett, pp. 418-419; Hans Egon Holthusen, "Brecht's Dramatic Theory," Brecht: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Peter Demetz (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962), pp. 106-116; and Ernst Bloch, "Entfremdung, Verfremdung: Alienation, Estrangement," Brecht, edited by Erika Munk (New York, 1972), pp. 3-11.

[22]Holthusen, "Brecht's Dramatic Theory," p. 109.

[23]Ibid., p. 108.

Brecht first heard the word "ostrannenie" on his stop-over in Moscow, enroute to America, when he met Mei Lan-Fang. This well-known Chinese actor introduced Brecht to an alienated style of acting. In the Chinese theatre, a scene could be performed in a critical, objective manner without makeup, costume, or lighting. This "new technique of acting" became the principal style of performance for Brecht's productions in America and Germany.

Alienation in the Play's Structure

When Brecht wrote his plays, he used several rather traditional literary devices to achieve the verfremdungseffekt. The two principal ones were foreign locales, and prologues and epilogues.

Foreign Locales

In most of Brecht's plays, characters with identifiable and unique personalities were placed into environments which were strange to them or inconsistent with their lives. Special attention was thus directed to the play's sociohistorical milieu, and the involvement of the spectators in the play was lessened. China was the setting for The Good Woman of Setzuan, for example, and the city of Setzuan represented "all the places on earth where man is exploited by other men."[24] The concept of a "hell on earth" was removed from

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[24]Walter Weideli, The Art of Bertolt Brecht (New York, 1963), p. 90.

metaphysics and placed in a human plane. The recognizable suffering of the heroine, Shen Te, and her alter ego, Shui Ta, was endured in a remote portion of the world, unfamiliar to the average theatregoer, whose susceptibility to estrangement was thereby increased. In the same way, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, set in Georgian Russia, told the story of the persecution and ultimate triumph of maternal love. Based on an ancient Chinese legend and play similar in theme to the Biblical "Judgment of Solomon," Brecht's play dealt with the dispute over land rights between two collective farms. The prologue established the locale and the basis for conflict between the two factions--the sheepherders who yielded the land parcel to the advancing German armies and the fruitgrowers who defended it and made agricultural improvements while combat raged. The major portion of the play told the story of an infant abandoned by its mother during a revolution. The child was found, cared for and ultimately adopted by a servant girl. Following the revolution, the mother attempted to regain custody of her child, but a "good, bad judge" determined it should remain with the servant girl because she had demonstrated a truly maternal attitude which would best serve the child. Thus the fruitgrowers were awarded the disputed land.

Another four plays--In the Jungle of the Cities, Happy End, Saint Joan of the Stockyards, and The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui--depicted events which were set in Chicago. In the

Jungle of the Cities described the ruthless character of violent love and revenge in the small-business world of Chicago. Happy End, one of Brecht's least successful efforts, set the gangster elements of Chicago against religion. A comic plot contrivance brought the opposing forces together to organize a banking institution, and thus achieve the "happy end" of the title. Saint Joan of the Stockyards, one of Brecht's two "Joan of Arc" plays, transferred Joan's story into the meat industry and the stock market of Chicago. The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, the last and most successful of the Chicago plays, enacted a parallel to Hitler's rise to power amid promises of protection and control; it was a parable play "written with the aim of destroying the usual disastrous respect which we feel for great murderers."[25]

Other "foreign" locales used by Brecht in his plays included England (The Threepenny Opera and Edward the Second), Finland (Herr Puntila and His Man Matti), Mongolia (The Exception and the Rule), India (Man Equals Man), France (The Days of the Commune and The Visions of Simone Machard), Czechoslovakia (Schweik in the Second World War), and Italy (Galileo and The Trial of Lucullus).

Only four plays had their locale placed in or around Germany. One of them, Mother Courage and Her Children, ranged over the North European provinces that became the

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[25]Willett, The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht, p. 52.

German Empire in the nineteenth century, and three plays--Drums in the Night, The Private Life of the Master Race, and The Tutor--were set in Germany during the 1930's and the 1940's. Mother Courage and Her Children dealt with the Thirty Years' War in a way that paralleled the history of the twentieth century; the other three treated the control and devastation of Germany by the Nazis with harsh and sardonic humor that bordered on the tragic.

Prologues and Epilogues

In most of his plays, Brecht used prologues and epilogues which contained statements directing the audiences to think about the problems shown on the stage and calling for specific actions. Occasionally, as in Man Equals Man, Brecht halted the forward movement of the story to insert a prologue at the beginning of a particular scene. In Man Equals Man, for example, the moral of the play--that the world was dangerous to those who tried to fight it--was openly stated by a prologue to Scene 9. The Good Woman of Setzuan contained several such estranging interruptions. After a speech delineating the conditions of Setzuan, Wong the Waterseller encountered the Three Gods, who proceeded to explain their intent to find a man worthy of receiving special blessings. As the exchange continued, the Gods and Wong discussed human reactions to the prospect of receiving gods in their homes. The attitudes and ethics which were expressed reflected the

world's cynicism. Then, at the close of the play, after the Three Gods had departed to their home "above the azure vault and silver stars," Shen Te heard a chorus singing a song extolling the rewards for doing good in one's life, as the Good Woman cried for the Gods to return.

The Threepenny Opera opened with just such a song. The Street Singer, however, extolled the skillfulness of Macheath, who stalked and killed his victims in the manner of a shark. This human shark was the hero of the play who was rewarded for his evildoing. A major irony in the success of The Threepenny Opera was that the lyrics for this ballad about Macheath were actually devised from a passage of Karl Marx's Das Kapital; yet this song, known popularly as "Mack the Knife," became immensely successful in capitalist America. Perhaps, as Weideli believed, the song expressed the yearnings of the German masses who "remained in the shadows."[26]

At any rate, the alienation in The Threepenny Opera was sought through a prologue and an epilogue. In the same way, The Exception and the Rule opened and closed with speeches from a group of actors who, at the first of the play, instructed the audience to watch closely the behavior of the people in the play and not assume all that happens in life was not providential or permanent. At the end of the play,

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[26]Weideli, p. 26.

the actors again appeared to encourage the audience to work for the improvement of man's condition.

> Even if it's not very strange, find it estranging
> Even if it is usual, find it hard to explain
> What here is common should astonish you
> What here's the rule, recognize as an abuse
> And where you have recognized an abuse
> Provide a remedy![27]

Similarly, the opening and closing of Herr Puntila and His Man Matti were simple statements that, in the prologue, explained the context of servant and master and, in the epilogue, urged the servants to leave their masters and become their own good masters.

Prologues of extreme impact were created for The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui and Schweik in the Second World War. In the former, an announcer dressed as a ringmaster in a circus stepped forward to introduce the characters in "a great gangster show" and then tersely stated the particular events which would occur in the play. At the beginning of Schweik in the Second World War, the prologue showed the major leaders of the Nazi regime standing around a globe while they plotted world conquests. When Hitler asked his subordinates how he was regarded by the common man in Germany, he was assured that he was enthusiastically supported throughout the country. The action of the play revealed the nature and the degree of that enthusiasm.

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[27]Bertolt Brecht, "The Exception and the Rule," The Jewish Wife and Other Short Plays, translated by Eric Bentley (New York, 1965), p. 143.

Songs and Music

Though Brecht was not an outstanding musician and composer, his "musical ideas" and the "musical implications" in his works were frequently acclaimed. For three of his early plays--Baal, Drums in the Night, and Edward II--Brecht composed his own music, which was rudimentary and lacking in power. Beginning with Man Equals Man, he collaborated with various composers to produce a wide range of musical works.

In any case, musical interludes and songs were used in all but three of Brecht's plays: In the Jungle of the Cities, The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, and The Tutor. In the others, musical devices stressed the point under consideration or diverted the attention of the audience from the scene being performed by breaking the dramatic tension, the intended result being alienation. Each interlude or song that halted the progress of the story was designed to provide an interruption when it would be least expected. Drawing from Chinese theatre, Brecht also used a song to distract from a change of scenery, costumes, or other technical apparatus, as in Man Equals Man, or to suggest the passage of time, as in Mother Courage and Her Children. When the singer was offstage, the lyrics of the song became more important and the alienation was increased.

The most effective use of a musical score in Brecht's plays occurred in The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny and The Threepenny Opera. The music, composed by Kurt Weill,

was described by Willett as "sharply orchestrated and free from all mushiness (which) fitted Brecht's conception of a down-to-earth vernacular language (and) also helped establish his dramatic points."[28] In particular, the songs epitomized Brecht's achievements in "gestic music," that is, songs which not only informed or instructed the listener, but also indicated character attitudes.

In The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, three criminals found the city of Mahagonny--"the city of nets" to catch all comers--somewhere in a desert region of the United States of America. There they attempted to live by thievery and swindling in a paradise of pleasure. After prostitutes and moneyed lumberjacks arrived and the town was decorated with numerous signs dictating the pattern of life, decay from inactivity and boredom set in. In the midst of physical indulgences, a hurricane struck terror in every heart. As the people of Mahagonny began to realize "increasing confusion, inflation, and hostility of everyone against everyone," money became their sole reason for existence; without it, no one deserved to live.[29] Chaotic demonstrations by the capitalist citizens of Mahagonny resulted in the burning of the city. The comparison between Mahagonny and Berlin was obvious, and the sense of foreboding for Germany's capital

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[28]Willett, The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht, p. 130.

[29]Karl H. Schoeps, Bertolt Brecht (New York, 1977), p. 140.

overwhelming. As a result, the premiere was greeted with scandal, fist fights, riotous demonstrations, and contempt that brought to the surface the societal attitudes of the time, especially "the dichotomy between order and anarchy."[30] The tumultuous responses to Brecht's message seemed to indicate the success of verfremdungseffekt.

Throughout The Threepenny Opera, Brecht presented the idea that values and virtues were not profitable, and had to be sacrificed for the sake of money. Unselfish love between man and woman, for example, was shown to be a foolish romantic dream, as Lucy Brown trapped Macheath into marriage by feigning pregnancy. When she justified her action by her need for financial security, love had been replaced by economics. Nor did friendship have a purpose unless the parties involved could make money from it. A corrupt society was a jungle, Brecht said further, and survival a matter of jungle law:

> What does a man live by? By grinding, sweating
> Defeating, beating, cheating, eating some other man
> For he can only live by sheer forgetting
> Forgetting that he ever was a man.[31]

Thus, society was an arena for a never-ending conflict between the proletariat and the capitalists in which the bankers and stockholders were only thieves in disguise.[32]

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[30] Ibid., p. 146.

[31] Bernard F. Dukore, "The Temptation of Goodness," Educational Theatre Journal, XV (May, 1963), 107.

[32] Schoeps, p. 136.

Kurt Weill's music for The Threepenny Opera had an unpredictability which Brecht wanted in order to keep his audiences from being lulled into the comfort they had experienced in the illusionist theatre, and the songs actually interrupted the performance. Never overcoming the literary aspects of the lyrics, the music offered "a kind of punctuation, an underlining of the words, a well-aimed comment giving the gist of the action of the text."[33]

Both The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, which was more opera than play, and The Threepenny Opera, which was the reverse, combined nostalgia with alienation. The major difference in the works was Brecht's alternation of the rhythmical and nonmetered dialogue, sometimes to the accompaniment of the orchestra, sometimes unaccompanied, and sometimes arranged in contrapuntal combination of solos and chorus. An especially dramatic example of Brecht's intricate interweaving of music and dialogue appeared in The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, when the love scene between Jim and Jenny occurred in a brothel with a long queue of impatient men outside clamoring to be admitted. Similarly, in The Threepenny Opera, all the love scenes were presented in grotesque parody that exhibited the bourgeois sentimentality of the lower classes.

These two "operas" or "ballad operas" apart, Brecht used songs in all of his plays. In fact, they were his most

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[33]Willett, The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht, p. 132.

potent alienation devices. Songs like "The Fishwife and the Soldier" in Mother Courage and Her Children amplified a point which may or may not relate to the scene at hand (in this case, not):

> COMMANDER. You have the makings of a Julius Caesar, why, you should be presented to the King!
> EILIF. I've seen him--from a distance of course. He seemed to shed a light all around. I must try to be like him!
> COMMANDER. I think you're succeeding, my boy! Oh, Eilif, you don't know how I value a brave soldier like you!
> (He takes him to the map)
> Take a look at our position, Eilif, it isn't all it might be, is it?
> MOTHER COURAGE. (Who has been listening and is now plucking angrily at her capon) He must be a very bad commander.
> COOK. Just a greedy one. Why bad?
> MOTHER COURAGE. Because he needs brave soldiers, that's why. If his plan of campaign was any good, why would he need brave soldiers, wouldn't plain, ordinary soldiers do? Whenever there are great virtues, it's a sure sign something's wrong.
> COOK. You mean, it's a sure sign something's right.
> MOTHER COURAGE. I mean what I say. Listen. When a king is a stupid king and leads his soldiers into a trap, they need this virtue of courage. When he's tight-fisted and hasn't enough soldiers, the few he does have need the heroism of Hercules--another virtue. And if he's a sloven and doesn't give a damn about anything, they have to fend for themselves and be wise as serpents or they're through. Loyalty's another virtue and you need plenty of it if the king's always asking too much of you. But in a good country the virtues wouldn't be necessay. Everybody could be quite ordinary, middling, and, for all of me, cowards.
> COMMANDER. I bet your father was a soldier.
> EILIF. I've heard he was a great soldier. My mother warned me. I know a song about that.
> COMMANDER. Sing it to us.
> (Roaring)
> Bring that meat!
> EILIF. It's called THE SONG OF THE FISHWIFE AND THE SOLDIER.

(He sings and at the same time does a war dance with his saber)

To a soldier lad comes an old fishwife
And this old fishwife, says she:
A gun will shoot, a knife will knife,
You will drown if you fall in the sea.
Keep away from the ice if you want my advice,
Says the old fishwife, says she.
The soldier laughs and loads his gun
Then grabs his knife and starts to run:
It's the life of a hero for me!
From the north to the south I shall march through the land
With a knife at my side and a gun in my hand!
Says the soldier lad, says he.

When the lad defies the fishwife's cries
The old fishwife, says she:
The young are young, the old are wise,
You will drown if you fall in the sea.
Don't ignore what I say or you'll rue it one day!
Says the old fishwife, says she.
But gun in hand and knife at side
The soldier steps into the tide:
It's the life of a hero for me!
When the new moon is shining on shingle roofs white
We are all coming back, go and pray for that night!
Says the soldier lad, says he.

And the fishwife old does what she's told:
Down upon her knees drops she.
When the smoke is gone, the air is cold,
Your heroic deeds won't warm me!
See the smoke, how it goes! May God scatter his foes!
Down upon her knees drops she.
But gun in hand and knife at side
The lad is swept out by the tide:
He floats with the ice to the sea.
And the new moon is shining on shingle roofs white
But the lad and his laughter are lost in the night:
He floats with the ice to the sea.

COMMANDER. What a kitchen I've got! There's no end to the liberties they take!

EILIF. (Has entered the kitchen and embraced his mother) To see you again! Where are the others?

MOTHER COURAGE. (In his arms) Happy as ducks in a pond. Swiss Cheese is paymaster with the Second Protestant Regiment, so at least he isn't in the fighting, I couldn't keep him out altogether.

EILIF. Are your feet holding up?
MOTHER COURRAGE. I've a bit of trouble getting my shoes on in the morning.
COMMANDER. (Who has come over) So, you're his mother! I hope you have more sons for me like this fellow.
EILIF. If I'm not the lucky one: you sit there in the kitchen and hear your son being feasted!
MOTHER COURAGE. Yes. I heard all right.
(Gives him a box on the ear)
EILIF. Because I took the oxen?
MOTHER COURAGE. No. Because you didn't surrender when the four peasants let fly at you and tried to make mincemeat of you! Didn't I teach you to take care of yourself? Finnish devil!
(The COMMANDER and the CHAPLAIN stand laughing in the doorway)[34]

The strangeness of such songs in their contexts was intended to force the hearers to listen and to analyze the literal as well as the songs' meanings. Another example of this technique, "Song of the Smoke" in The Good Woman of Setzuan, delineated an attitude held by a character, or characters, that commented on the scene:

(Enter a boy leading an old man)
THE BOY. (Calling over his shoulder) Here they are.
THE WIFE. Good evening, Grandfather. (To SHEN TE) The good old man! He must have worried about us. And the boy, hasn't he grown? He eats like ten men. Well, who else did you bring, for heaven's sake?
THE HUSBAND. (Looking outside) Only our niece.
THE SISTER-IN-LAW. (Softly to the NEPHEW while a young girl comes in) The rats climb onto the sinking ship!
THE WIFE. (To SHEN TE) A young relative from the country. I hope we aren't too many for you. We weren't quite as many when you were living with us, were we? Yes, we got more and more. The less we had, the more there were of us. And the more there

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[34]Bertolt Brecht, "Mother Courage and Her Children," Masters of Modern Drama, edited by Haskell M. Block and Robert G. Shedd (New York, 1962), pp. 848-849.

were of us, the less we had. But now we'll lock up, or there won't be a moment's peace. (She locks the door and they all sit down) We mustn't disturb you in your business, that's the main thing. Or how can the fire be kept burning? We thought we might arrange matters something like this: during the day the young ones will go off and only grandfather, the sister-in-law, and maybe I myself will stay. The others will look in at the most once or twice during the day, all right? Light the lamp over there and make yourself at home.

THE NEPHEW. (Humorously) If only the cousin doesn't pop up tonight all of a sudden. The strict Mr. Shui Ta!

(The SISTER-IN-LAW laughs)

THE BROTHER. (Reaching for a cigarette) One cigarette won't matter much.

THE HUSBAND. I'm sure it won't.

(They all help themselves to cigarettes. The BROTHER hands round a jug of wine)

THE NEPHEW. The cousin will pay for it.

THE GRANDFATHER. (Seriously to SHEN TE) Good evening!

(SHEN TE is confused by the belated greeting and bows. In one hand she holds the CARPENTER'S bill, in the other the lease)

THE WIFE. Couldn't you sing something to entertain our hostess a little?

THE NEPHEW. Grandfather will start!

(They sing)

SONG OF THE SMOKE

I used to think (before old age beset me)
That brains could fill the pantry of the poor.
But where did all my cerebration get me?
I'm just as hungry as I was before.
So what's the use?
See the smoke float free
Into even colder coldness!
It's the same with me.

The straight and narrow path leads to disaster
And so the crooked path I tried to tread.
That got me to disaster even faster.
(They say we shall be happy when we're dead.)
So what's the use?
See the smoke float free
Into ever colder coldness!
It's the same with me.

You older people, full of expectation,
At any moment now you'll walk the plank!
The future's for the younger generation!
Yes, even if that future is a blank.
So what's the use?
See the smoke float free
Into ever colder coldness!
It's the same with me.

THE NEPHEW. Where did you get the wine?
THE SISTER-IN-LAW. He pawned the bag of tobacco.
THE HUSBAND. What? That tobacco was the only thing left to us! We didn't even touch it to pay for our lodgings! You swine!
THE BROTHER. Do you call me a swine because my wife is cold? And you had a drink yourself? Give me the jug this minute!
(They fight. The shelves fall over)
SHEN TE. (Imploring them) Oh, spare the store! Don't destroy everything! It's a gift of the gods! Take what there is, but don't destroy it all!
THE WIFE. (Skeptically) The store is smaller than I thought. Perhaps we shouldn't have mentioned it to Auntie and the others. If they come too, it'll be very crowded.
THE SISTER-IN-LAW. Our hostess is cooling off already.
(There are voices outside and a knocking on the door)
SHOUTS FROM OUTSIDE. Open up! It's us!
THE WIFE. Is that you, Auntie! What are we going to do?
SHEN TE. O hope! My beautiful store! I bought it yesterday and today it's done for.
The little lifeboat
Is swiftly sent down
Too many people greedily
Reach for it as they drown.
SHOUTS FROM OUTSIDE. Open up![35]

Before Brecht, "serious" music, frequently lyrical and occasionally self-indulgent, had been incorporated into theatrical productions primarily for cosmetic reasons, to enhance "the narrow stuffiness of the impressionistic

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[35]Bertolt Brecht, "The Good Woman of Setzuan," Masters of Modern Drama, edited by Haskel M. Block and Robert G. Shedd (New York, 1962), pp. 877-878.

dramas and the manic lop-sidedness of the expressionists."[36] As Brecht's career continued, however, the "gestic" music accompanying the reflective and instructive ballads became devices for social moralizing and attitudinal expression. Interrupting the dramatic tension, such musical events created an effective verfremdungseffekt.

The Language of Alienation

Since Brecht was first of all a poet, the dialogue in his plays always had a special impact. Kahn wrote:

> If it weren't for Brecht's diction! Again and again it simply forces you to listen. His characters may talk the silliest stuff for quarters of an hour on end. In parts what they say is completely devoid of sense. But the point is: How they say it! No other writer has caught the speech of the masses of the people as Brecht has. . . . The choice of words itself is banal, but the way they are put together almost amounts to genius. . . . This language rises up from depths in which the conscious self only flickers as a far-off, little taper.[37]

The distinctive factor in this poetic dialogue was the direct and simple "memorable speech," which made "bold use of hackneyed words in unhackneyed contexts."[38]

Brecht considered the classical High German, or hochdeutsch, of Goethe and Schiller contrived, lifeless, without

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[36]Bertolt Brecht, "On the Use of Music in an Epic Theatre," Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic, edited by John Willett (New York, 1964), p. 84.

[37]Harry Kahn, "Bert Brecht," Die Weltbuehne, XXIV (January, 1928), 102-103.

[38]Martin Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work (New York, 1971), p. 110.

resemblance to popular speech, and devoid of appeal to the working classes. Difficulty in translating German had been a persistent problem encountered by poets and playwrights of the nineteenth century as there was no standard German dialect which would serve all regions. Literature was written either in hochdeutsch or in a dialect which placed the author as a product of a particular province. Brecht was the first German writer of the early twentieth century to escape this "vise of language" and create a speech of his own. What he did was blend four major sources: (1) the colloquial speech of Southern Germany; (2) an anti-metaphorical poetry of colors, textures, and other concrete images; (3) bureaucratic jargon; and (4) anglicisms and exotic expressions.[39]

The simplicity of language which characterized Brecht's writing came largely from his use of everyday words and colloquialisms in such a way as to establish a sense of the "unclear familiar." Every phrase sounded reminiscent of something from the past, but that something was elusive and indescribable. Though the lyrics of his songs dominated his realistic dialogue, which was also highly poetic, both compelled the audience to pay close attention to the activities on the stage. One attribute that was missing was a single specific regional characteristic. Dialects and idioms from various regions, especially Bavaria, were mixed with

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[39]Ernest Borneman, "Credo Quia Absurdum: An Epitaph for Bertolt Brecht," The Kenyon Review, XXI (Spring, 1959), 172.

occasional elements of High German; the result was an almost artificial language spoken by no one except possibly Brecht himself.[40]

Evocative images tumbled over each other in Brecht's earliest plays--Baal and Drums in the Night, for example. Strongly influenced by the plays of Georg Büchner (1813-1837) and Frank Wedekind (1864-1918), Brecht's word pictures had an enormous fury and startling rhythms that projected sudden shifts in attitude from gentle to gross, from shocking to sensuous:

> BAAL. Your parents (He reaches for his guitar) are a thing of the past. Rotting teeth in their mouths. How can they open such mouths against love, which can be the death of any of us? If love is too much for you, you vomit yourselves up. (He is tuning the guitar)
> JOHANNES. She gets pregnant, you mean?
> BAAL. (With some harsh chords) When summer swims off, mild and pale, they have already sucked up love like sponges, and they've turned back into animals, childish and wicked, with fat bellies and dripping breasts, completely shapeless, and with wet, clinging arms like slimy squids. And their bodies disintegrate, and are sick unto death. And with a ghastly outcry, as if a new world were on the way, they give birth to a small piece of fruit. They spit out in torment what once they had sucked up in lust. (He plays glissandos) One must have teeth. Then love's like biting into an orange when the juice squirts in your teeth.
> JOHANNES. Your teeth are the teeth of an animal: grayish-yellow, massive, uncanny.
> BAAL. And love's like letting your naked arm drift in pond water with weeds between your fingers. Like torment at which a drunken tree, when the wild winds ride it, starts singing with a groan. Like drowning in gurgling wine on a hot day. And her body seeps like very cool wine into every fold of

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[40] Ibid.

your skin. Your joints are pliable as plants in the wind. And the force of the attack is so great you feel you're flying against a stormwind. You give way, and her body rolls over you like cool gravel. But love is also like a coconut which is good while it's fresh, but you have to spit it out when the juice is gone, what's left tastes bitter. (Throws the guitar away) But enough of this aria.

JOHANNES. So you think I should go ahead, if it's so beautiful?

BAAL. I think you should steer clear, my dear Johannes.[41]

Since the events in Drums in the Night reflected the chaos and horror experienced by people struggling to survive in the aftermath of war, Brecht's language depicted their sordid and sorrowful natures, with touches of savage humor and sardonic lyricism, as they explored into the "Spartakus" uprising:

MURK. Watch out, don't pull that knife on me. Control youself: no heroics here or you'll end up in jail.

MARIE. Were you in the service?

MURK. (Furious, throws a glass at her) Why weren't you?

KRAGLER. I've come now.

MURK. Was anybody yelling at you?

KRAGLER. Here I am.

MURK. Bastard!

ANNA. Shut up, honey!

(KRAGLER ducks)

MURK. Robber!

KRAGLER. (Soundlessly) Thief!

MURK. Ghost!

KRAGLER. Watch your language!

MURK. Watch your knife! Did that get under your skin? Ghost? Ghost! Ghost!

MARIE. You bastard! You bastard!

KRAGLER. Anna, Anna, what am I doing? Seasick on a sea that swarms with corpses but doesn't suck me

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[41]Bertolt Brecht, "Baal," Baal, A Man's a Man, and The Elephant Calf: Early Plays of Bertolt Brecht, edited by Eric Bentley (New York, 1964), pp. 27-28.

down. Rolling southward in the dark cattle cars: nothing can happen to me. Burning in the fiery oven: I burn hotter myself. A man goes mad in the sun: not me. Two men fall into a water hole: I go on sleeping. I shoot blacks. I eat grass. I'm a ghost.

(At this point the WAITER rushes to the window and yanks it open. The music stops suddenly. Excited shouts are heard: "They're coming!" "Keep still!" The WAITER blows out the candle. Then, outside, a measured stamping, slowly growing louder. Yells, whistles, singing, drumming. The stamping and yelling continue.)

A MAN. (Enters doorway from left) Please be calm, ladies and gentlemen. You are requested not to leave the premises. Disturbances have broken out. Fighting is going on around the newspaper offices. The situation is unsettled.

BALICKE. (Sits down heavily) Spartacus! Your pals, Mr. Andrew Kragler! Your partners in crime! Your comrades, yelling around the papers and whistling into cafes. Reeking with murder and arson. Brutes! (Silence) Brutes, brutes, brutes! Everybody knows it! You're cannibals! You'll have to be wiped out!

WAITER. And you gluttons are the ones to do it.

MURK. You got a knife, too? Let's see it![42]

The idioms of the Communist bureaucracy dominated the plays from the Marxist period of Brecht's life (1924-1933). Phrases reminiscent of government documents were prominently involved in the dialogue and the lyrics. Agriculture, economics, public health, food supplies, industrial activities, and the like were the subjects around which the narration was structured. "The Song of Supply and Demand" from The Measures Taken (1930), for example, introduced by a discussion between a Young Comrade who represented the naive,

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[42]Bertolt Brecht, "Drums in the Night," Jungle of Cities and Other Plays, edited by Eric Bentley (New York, 1966), pp. 125-126.

eager youth of the Communist Party and a Trader who symbolized the bureaucratic party leadership, was a vernacular and idiomatic "lesson" for humanity:

TRADER. Why do I get everything cheaper than anyone else? And why would a coolie work for me almost without pay?
YOUNG COMRADE. I don't know.
TRADER. Because I'm bright. You're pretty bright yourselves or how would you squeeze union dues out of your coolies?
YOUNG COMRADE. That's true--Incidentally, are you going to arm the coolies against the British?
TRADER. Maybe, maybe--I know how to handle a coolie. You must give him enough rice to keep him from dying. Otherwise, you can't get any work out of him. Is that right?
YOUNG COMRADE. Yes. That is right.
TRADER. I say it is not right. If coolies are cheaper than rice, I can get me a new coolie. Isn't that nearer the truth?
YOUNG COMRADE. Yes, that's nearer the truth--Incidentally, when will you start sending weapons into our section of the city?
TRADER. Soon, soon.--You couldn't help noticing that the coolies who load my leather eat my rice in the canteen?
YOUNG COMRADE. I couldn't help noticing.
TRADER. What do you think: do I pay a lot for the work?
YOUNG COMRADE. No, but your rice is expensive, and you insist on the work being well done, and your rice is bad rice.
TRADER. You people are bright.
YOUNG COMRADE. And when will you arm the coolies against the British?
TRADER. After dinner we can inspect the arsenal Now I'm going to sing you my favorite song.

THE SONG OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Down the river there is rice
In the provinces up the river people need rice:
If we leave the rice in the warehouses
The rice will cost them more
Those who pull the rice barge will then get less rice
And rice will be even cheaper for me

What is rice actually?
Do I know what rice is?
God knows what rice is!
I don't know what rice is!
I only know its price

Winter comes, the people need clothing
One must buy up the cotton
And not let go of it
When the cold weather comes, clothing will cost more
The cotton-spinning mills pay too high wages
There's too much cotton around anyway
What is cotton actually?
Do I know what cotton is?
God knows what cotton is!
I don't know what cotton is
I only know its price

Likewise men--they need too much food
And so men get to cost more
To make the food, men are needed
Cooks make the food cheaper
But those who eat it make it cost more
There aren't enough men around anyway.
What is a man actually?
Do I know what a man is?
God knows what a man is!
I don't know what a man is
I only know his price
(To the YOUNG COMRADE:)
And now we're going to eat my good rice.[43]

The use of exotic phrases was an important means of alienation. The greater the distance between Germany and the locales for Brecht's plays, the more fascinated he was with the localisms that could be incorporated into the dialogue. Among the expressions of anarchist ideology in The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, for instance, were many Americanisms (such as "whiskey-bar" and "John Jacob Smith") and

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[43]Bertolt Brecht, "The Measures Taken," The Jewish Wife and Other Short Plays, edited by Eric Bentley (New York, 1965), pp. 94-96.

several references to such places as Alabama, Pensacola, and Alaska. Names popular in America--Fatty, Jenny, Jim, Jake, Bill, and Joe--emphasized the placing of common people in uncommon conditions where they could match wits with even more uncommon adversaries.

The major influence on Brecht's writing, according to Brecht himself, was Martin Luther's Bible.[44] Phrases styled like those of Luther, the Protestant priest, appeared throughout the plays of Brecht, the atheist. "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," for example was sung by the Cook in Mother Courage and Her Children; Drums in the Night contained allusions reminiscent of the living conditions of John the Baptist and Jesus when Anna described her fiance Kragler as having "no shoes and only one coat";[45] and the judgment scene in The Caucasian Chalk Circle revealed Brecht's comprehension of the biblical drama of Solomon's life and reign as King of Israel.

Directing for Alienation

A major step toward the Epic Theatre that Brecht had been developing throughout his professional life occurred in 1949 when the East German government permitted him to direct a production of Mother Courage and Her Children with his wife

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[44]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 112.

[45]Bertolt Brecht, "Drums in the Night," Jungle of Cities and Other Plays, translated by Frank Jones (New York, 1966), p. 136.

Helene Weigel in the title role. His directing of this and subsequent productions of other plays demonstrated the experimental approach which was necessary for the verfremdungseffekt.[46] Brecht the director made sure the production told a story clearly and entertainingly, but not without formal elegance.

Brecht's direction was governed by each play's need for alienation effects. This need sometimes required up to eighteen months for its satisfaction. Changes in the script or elsewhere in the production were made in rehearsals as Brecht deemed them necessary, and rehearsals followed the pattern delineated by Brecht in 1952:

> 1. Analysis of the Play. An initial step which could take six months to complete. Designed to discover the socially valuable insights and impulses the play offered. The story is condensed to half a sheet of paper and divided into separate episodes, setting the beats which move the story forward. Examination of the relationship of the episodes, and their construction. Devise ways to clarify the story and to bring out the social significance.
>
> 2. First discussion of the setting. Determine the basic idea of the set and develop stage sketches which supply elements of the story, groupings, individual attitudes of the chief characters.
>
> 3. Casting. Assign roles, with privilege of rearranging as needed. Avoid type-casting, and avoid theatrical convention wherever it contradicts reality.
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> 4. Reading rehearsal. Actors read their parts with the least possible expression and characterization, chiefly to acquaint themselves with the play. Distribute the analysis.

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[46]Carl Weber, "Brecht as Director," Brecht, edited by Erika Munk (New York, 1972), p. 103.

5. Positioning rehearsals (blocking). The phase in which the episodes are roughly and provisionally translated into positions and movements. Many variations are tried, with many suggestions being received from the actors. Phase can last three to four months. Characterizations begin to appear, attitudes and gestures are tentatively indicated, though without any attempt at continuity.

6. Set rehearsals. Blocking rehearsals are transferred to the set on stage. From this point on, no rehearsals were to be conducted away from an area which at least resembles the set, and no rehearsals were to be conducted without all props.

7. Detail rehearsals. Each detail is analyzed and rehearsed in detail, without any regard for the tempo of the scene. Actors begin to build up the attitudes of the characters toward each other. Main episodes begin to take shape, and the smaller linking scenes are carefully rehearsed to put the whole play in to good order. For purposes of authenticity, paintings and pictures of the period of the play are examined for specific gestures and positioning of characters.

8. Run-throughs. At times six months into the rehearsal process, the small units, major scenes and linking passages are rehearsed in sequence to establish continuity. Nothing is approaching a finished condition and changes continue to be made.

9. Discussion of costumes and masks. After the character groupings and movements are arranged, the costumes and masks are planned. Details such as shoes, high heels, long skirts, coats, glasses, beards, etc., are brought in for final approval.

10. Checking rehearsals. A comparative check is run to see if the initial insights and impulses of the script are coming into focus, whether the story is being appropriately and clearly told, and whether the major points or beats are being observed. During this phase the first polishing and finishing techniques are employed. Photographs are made for the character groupings to check for effectiveness.

11. Tempo rehearsals. Utilizing all technical apparatus, costumes, and properties, these rehearsals check the pacing or tempo of the production. Final determination of tempo is made, and scenes of variable lengths are set.

12. Dress rehearsals. Even with the advanced state of preparation, changes are still made in the production, even to changes in the script and patterns of movement. Costumes and properties were often changed.

13. Marking or indicating run-throughs. An exercise conducted by Brecht after the final dress rehearsals, in which the actors, without costumes, but with the set, walked quickly through the action of the play, delivering their lines mechanically, with no effort at action, but observing the rhythm and pauses in the text. This type of rehearsal was designed to "detach" the actors from their roles if identification was taking place.

14. Previews. A practice Brecht learned about while living in America. Performance-type rehearsals with audiences in attendance, checking the reactions to the performance. Homogenous groups, such as students or workers, were encouraged to attend these previews to participate in the discussions which followed. Corrective rehearsals were conducted between the preview performances to remedy the problems discovered by the audiences.

15. Performances. Brecht or one of his assistants attended every performance to assure consistency and to note any scenes which needed additional work or in which changes were necessary. An irregular schedule of rehearsals was maintained after the public performances began.[47]

Throughout this long and somewhat laborious process, Brecht conducted rehearsals in a relaxed, almost casual manner. Somewhat like experiments in a laboratory, the rehearsals were filled with humor and other devices to ease tensions and particularly to keep the actors "alienated" from the characters in the plays.[48] Long discussions,

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[47]Bertolt Brecht, "'Theatrearbeit': An Editorial Note," Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic, edited by John Willett (New York, 1964), pp. 240-242.

[48]Weber, p. 103.

particularly discussions of psychological descriptions, were not permitted during the rehearsals. "Don't talk about it; do it" was the catch phrase; if an actor had difficulty with a line or a movement, Brecht occasionally used demonstrations to get the desired results.[49] Such presentations were never complete, however, and he allowed room for the actors to apply their imaginations to every scene. Nor did Brecht concern himself with the way actors studied their roles outside the rehearsal hall. Permitting them to do as they wished in matters of personal preparation, he was concerned only with the results of their work: how they looked and acted within the ensemble on the stage.[50] During breaks, Brecht would often engage in animated, frivolous conversation with his actors to increase their rapport with him, but when rehearsals were in progress, he demanded that the actors commit themselves totally to the practicing.

Characters acting and reacting with each other as actors in a social milieu were the basic units of Brecht's theatre of alienation. The attitudes displayed in these patterns of interaction were called "gestus," a term, according to Esslin, which was defined as not merely "gesture" but which covered a whole range of outward signs of social relationships. With gestus, in which relationships were objectified,

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[49]"Bertolt Brecht the Director," Brecht As They Knew Him, edited by Hubert Witt (New York, 1974), p. 129.

[50]Weber, p. 109.

Brecht shifted the focus from the characters' internal feelings to the kind of external behavior they manifested toward each other. Brecht wanted to establish a gestus which was so simple and expressive that it could be cited as easily as a well-tuned line of dialogue. In Brecht's productions, the stage was a place to build models of the world man had created for himself.

Alienation in Acting

According to Esslin, the basic principle of Brechtian acting was the concept that the actor should never regard himself as an impersonator of the character he was portraying, but rather a narrator relating the activities of a person in a particular time in the past. By going through the motions of the character, imitating his vocal patterns and duplicating his facial expressions in an objective, intellectual manner, such a performer sought a style that was "acting in quotation marks."[51]

In "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," Brecht described the work of the professional Chinese actor, Mei Lan-Fang, from whose performances in Moscow in 1935, as Brecht was traveling to America, many of Brecht's concepts were derived. The organized, symbolic performances by Mei Lan-Fang seemed to reveal that the actor knew he was being watched. At any rate, he eliminated the illusion of the

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[51]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 137.

fourth wall and chose positions which showed him to the best advantage to the audience. Though he never put himself into a trance-like state, he was not distracted by interruptions from the audience or the other actors. The performance continued even while the scenery was being changed behind the actors. What was mistaken by many Western actors as a cold style of performance was in reality often a scene of intense passion which was being performed without heated delivery and with complete control and objectivity.[52]

Realizing that such control and objectivity could not occur if the actors became entangled in the emotional lives of the characters they were portraying, Brecht employed two procedures to encourage the actors's detachments. At various points in the rehearsal process, they were asked to translate their dialogue into the third person and to narrate the story of the actions and speeches of the characters rather than speaking the lines with any sort of characterization. A second procedure for inhibiting the identification of an actor with a character was the practice of reading all the stage directions for the character along with the lines of dialogue which were to be included in the performance.[53]

Brecht's theory of acting thus was based on relaxed, controlled, and rational observation. As Esslin put it, the

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[52]Bertolt Brecht, "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," Brecht on Theatre: The Development of An Aesthetic, edited by John Willett (New York, 1964), p. 93.

[53]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 145.

performance had to "comment on the character's actions so that the audience can see the actor's approval or disapproval, his pity or contempt, for the character."[54] The actor demonstrated to the audience that the pattern of action followed by the character was not the only possible course to travel and that viable alternatives could be realized by viewing his performance objectively. This awareness of the audience and a deliberate dropping of cues and suggestions were in direct opposition to the style of acting which prevailed in Europe and America at that time. Most actors of the 1920's and 1930's looked to Stanislavsky's method of introspection for their motivational powers. For Brecht, the inner lives of the characters were irrelevant except as they were externalized through attitudes and actions.[55]

Externalizing in this manner required "alienation" of the audience from the characters. In A Short Organum for the Theatre, Brecht wrote:

> In order to produce A-effects (alienation effects) the actor has to discard whatever means he has learnt of getting the audience to identify itself with the characters which he plays. Aiming not to put his audience into a trance, he must not go into a trance himself. His muscles must remain loose, for a turn of the head, e.g. with tautened neck muscles, will "magically" lead the spectators' eyes and even their heads to turn with it, and this can only detract from any speculation or reaction which the gesture may bring about. His way of speaking has to be free from parsonical sing-song and from all those cadences which lull the spectator so that the sense gets lost. Even if he plays a man possessed

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[54] Ibid., p. 138.

[55] Ibid., p. 140.

> he must not seem to be possessed himself, for how is the spectator to discover what possessed him if he does?[56]

To achieve such effects, Brecht and his actors maintained a special professional relationship during rehearsals. As they prepared the fullest realizations of his plays that were possible, there were no attempts to use the rehearsals as training programs. It was assumed that the actors were already trained, and the time designated for rehearsals was spent in shaping their abilities into the mold of the plays. Unlike Stanislavsky, who considered every rehearsal and performance a time for further growth in acting skills, Brecht needed a highly skilled and indeed prefabricated performance if alienation was to occur.

Yet according to Bentley, Brecht never considered that "epic" acting had been successfully achieved by the Berliner Ensemble or any other group. There were, in fact, no true Brechtian actors. "Evidently what he had was a vision of what acting might become, given not only changes on stage, but also in the auditorium. Should this vision ever be realized, it is conceivable that Stanislavsky may prove to have been one of the contributors of it."[57]

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[56]Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," p. 193.

[57]Eric Bentley, "Are Stanislavsky and Brecht Commensurable," Brecht, edited by Erika Munk (New York, 1972), p. 132.

Alienation Through Technical Effects

Sometime in his career, Brecht wrote the following undated note:

> It's more important nowadays for the set to tell the spectator he's in a theatre than to tell him he's in, say, Aulis. The theatre must acquire . . . the same fascinating reality as a sporting arena during a boxing match. The best thing is to show the machinery, the ropes and the flies.
>
> If the set represents a town it must look like a town that has been built to last precisely two hours. One must conjure up the reality of time.
>
> Everything must be provisional yet polite. A place need only have the credibility of a place glimpsed in a dream.
>
> The set needs to spring from the rehearsal groupings, so in effect it must be a fellow-actor.
>
> Space needs to be brought to life in the vertical plane. This can be achieved by stairs, though not by covering the stairs with people.
>
> On the time-scale the set must plainly become intensified; it must have its own climax and special round of applause.
>
> The materials of the set must be visible. A play can be performed in pasteboard only, or in pasteboard and wood, or in canvas, and so on; but there mustn't be any faking.[58]

This rationale for the design of the scenery for his plays was opposed to the scenic techniques of the illusionist theatre. Brecht wanted the mechanical devices of technical theatre to be clearly visible to the audience. Only a background for the action, or else a comment about it, the scenery was never an illusion of an actual locale.

Ewen contrasts a factory scene in one of Brecht's productions with the factory setting in a conventionally

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[58]Bertolt Brecht, "Stage Design for the Epic Theatre," Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic, edited by John Willett (New York, 1964), p. 233.

realistic production. A realistic locale require "a complicated structure, with chimneys, railway tracks and sidings, overhead lines, etc." In an epic theatre production, however, the spectator would see "a placard announcing wage-scales; a photograph of the proprietor; a page from the concern's catalogue depicting typical products; perhaps a photograph of a workers' picnic, some Sunday, in the managerial canteen."[59]

Brecht's audiences had to develop "the art of viewing." He believed that "the spectator could not fully enjoy the art of the theatre 'without any knowledge, without the capability for comparison, and the knowledge of the rules.'"[60] In every Brechtian production, conditions of estrangement were in effect from the time the spectator entered the auditorium. The house lights were brightly illuminating every corner of the house; musicians could be seen and heard as they practiced and warmed up for the performance; loud talking and much activity could be noted around the stage platform.[61]

When the spectator sat down, he discovered his seat was actually a folding chair, uncushioned and probably uncomfortable. A curtain of unusually plain description covered the front of the stage, similar to the function of the grand

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[59]Frederic Ewen, Bertolt Brecht: His Life, His Art, and His Times (New York, 1967), p. 226.

[60]Schoeps, p. 47.

[61]Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work, p. 143.

drape in the illusionist theatre. The major difference lay in the fact that the curtain on a Brechtian stage was usually about eight feet tall and masked only the lower part of the proscenium opening; the set, the properties, and the stage rigging were visible over the top. Even though the play had not begun, the stage lights were on full and the entire stage area was bright.[62]

As the performance began, the house lights remained up; there was no dimming of the spotlights on the stage. Nor was color used on the spotlights, which were hanging in clear view. At times a spotlight threw a beam of light over the auditorium area. The first of several signs were projected on the curtain. The projections might be mottos, the title of the play, or a brief description of the scene about to be performed. When the curtain opened, the spectator saw a sparsely-appointed arrangement of seemingly ill-designed furniture and scenic structures. If the scene was to represent an interior, the walls would only be indicated, not complete in any way. As the action began, the description of the setting and the placement of the few pieces of functional furniture commented in a striking way on the scene in progress or the characters involved in it.

The progress of the performance was constantly manipulated by or halted for changes of scenery, lowering of signs

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[62]Ibid., pp. 143-144.

and banners from the rigging over the stage, or changes in the projections. The action was performed almost as a narrative demonstration of the story, with every aspect of the performance carefully orchestrated and rehearsed. In the epic theatre, nothing was left to chance or whim.

Brecht's theatre of alienation thus had the "underlying assumption that the world was capable of being changed for the better," a point of view emphatically underscored by the design and the technical aspects of the production. Whatever was used to create the setting for his plays, however, had to be of the highest quality. As Gorelik put it, in an epic theatre production, the designer

> does not imagine a room for the characters, or a striking atmosphere. Instead he supplies all necessary properties, sections of doors or windows or steps, and arranges for these units to function with workmanlike precision. Of course, beauty is not excluded, since the resultant arrangement may possess its own beauty of form, and since beauty and color in some or all of the properties may be specifically necessary.[63]

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[63] Mordecai Gorelik, New Theatres for Old (New York, 1962), p. 423.

CHAPTER IV

BRECHT'S THEORY OF LEARNING THROUGH THEATRICAL EXPERIENCES

When Bertolt Brecht wrote that a "true, profound, active application of alienation effects" would cause the spectator to examine his life as if it were "historic and capable of improvement,"[1] he launched a special version of the field theories of learning. Despite his never having formally studied the theories propounded by Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, Wolfgang Kohler, and Kurt Lewin, what Brecht sought in the theatre was nothing more or less than a way to force the spectator to learn how to change his social milieu. Experiencing the production, he believed, "would teach social attitudes by showing the formalized actions of abstract social types."[2] The characters in a play would show the spectator ways in which the milieu could be changed:

> If we ensure that our characters on the stage are moved by social impulses and that these differ according to the period, then we make it harder for our spectator to identify himself with them. He cannot simply feel: that's how I would act, but at most can say: if I had

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[1]Bertolt Brecht, "Appendices to the Short Organum," Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic, edited by John Willett (New York, 1964), p. 277.

[2]Martin Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work (New York, 1971), p. 46.

> lived under those circumstances. And if we play works dealing with our own time as though they were historical, then perhaps the circumstances under which he himself acts will strike him as equally odd; and this is where the critical attitude begins.[3]

This chapter will first delineate the relationship between the learning theories presented by Wertheimer, Koffka, Kohler, and Lewin, and Brecht's theory of drama and theatre. Second, the chapter will examine Brecht's use of these learning theories in several of his plays, representing the major periods of his productive years.

Learning Theory Versus Brecht

Formulating theories that could become psychological principles of learning led to a major advance toward the solution of many educational problems. These problems were first studied in terms of stimulus-response or associative learning. That is, the focus was on the observable responses of subjects who were influenced by controlled stimuli. Experiments were designed for and tested in laboratories where the conditions were regulated and the results tabulated. Pavlov's theories of "classical" conditioning, for example, resulted directly from his detailed observations of a dog's behavior when he was consistently presented with the unconditioned stimulus (the meat) a short time after the conditioned stimulus (the ringing of the bell). Similarly,

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[3]Bertolt Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic, edited by John Willett (New York, 1964), p. 190.

Thorndike demonstrated his theories on connectionism by a repetitious series of trials through which a cat determined the most expedient procedure to receive food.

These empirical approaches to learning theory decreased the emotional involvement of the learner. The procedures and practices in the experiments were predetermined; the conditions were prearranged. During the experiment, only the reactions of the subjects were deemed significant by the scientists. Although such objective disregard for the well-being of the subjects would have pleased Brecht, this detachment was the only point of coincidence between Brecht and the associationists. The laboratory attitude removed the subjects from the open arena of creative thought and placed them into a fixed series of conditioned responses which, through "learning," were incorporated into their patterns of behavior.

This rigidity was denied by the Gestalt psychologists, who traced their concepts of the unity of perception to the observations of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). To Kant, perception was not merely "a passive impression and combination of sensory elements," but was actually "an active organization of these elements into a unitary and coherent experience."[4]

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, while the theories of behaviorism and associationism were

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[4]Duane P. Schultz, A History of Modern Psychology (New York, 1969), p. 241.

receiving widespread attention and acceptance in the United States, the Gestaltist movement in Europe was beginning to develop in direct opposition to the work of the German physiologist, Wilhelm Wundt, who had initiated the behavioral concepts which became known as "psychology." Wundt's work in experimental psychology had led to a systematic school of thought, later named "structuralism" and developed further by Wundt's protege, Edward B. Titchener.[5] Structuralism used scientific methods of investigation to divide human consciousness into separate parts of structured experience. Since this theory did not survive the tests of time and research, today structuralism is considered "a dead issue in contemporary psychology."[6]

Another theory, contemporary with that of Wundt and Titchener, was that physics and psychology were essentially similar. Ernst Mach (1838-1916) proposed that psychology must consider "non-physical" sensations which do not correspond to the physical reality known by the perceiver. Three dots on a sheet of paper, for example, were perceived as the points of a non-existent triangle. The dots themselves did not suggest the triangle, but the arrangements of the dots on the paper prompted the perception of the structure. An Austrian, Christian von Ehrenfels (1859-1922), stated that a perceiver consistently tried to establish a form, configuration, or meaning of all objects he saw, attempting thereby

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[5] Ibid., p. 43.

[6] Ibid., p. 54.

to organize his perceptions and integrate them into his experiences.

The first opposition to these theories came from Max Wertheimer (1880-1943), who advocated, rather, the study of consciousness as it appeared "in wholes," because human thoughts were "whole meaningful perceptions, not associated collections of images."[7] Wertheimer's first published attack on structuralism, Experimental Studies of the Perception of Movement (1912), was centered on the phenomenon of "apparent movement." When studying the movement "created" by the lights of electric advertising signs, Wertheimer noted the obvious fact that two or more components (the individual lamps) were lighted and extinguished in a sequence that produced only the impression of movement. Although the observer did not think the flashing lights were actually causing something to move, his impression of movement was strong and simultaneous. Having named this apparent movement the "phi phenomenon," Wertheimer used it as the basis for a further study of perception. His work emphasized that whole systems of conditions and situations must be experienced and that the wholes cannot be determined by examining each aspect separately. Wertheimer chose the word "Gestalt," which may be translated as "pattern" or "form," to describe these wholes.

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[7]Winfred F. Hill, Learning: A Survey of Psychological Interpretations (San Francisco, 1963), p. 92.

In 1945, when Wertheimer's Productive Thinking was published, the relationship between Gestaltist ideas and creative thinking was delineated. Through a study of young subjects encountering and solving complicated problems from mathematics and Einstein's theory of relativity, Wertheimer determined that the details of a problem should not be considered dominant over the whole structure of the total situation. To Wertheimer, the comprehension of a complete condition would facilitate the understanding of its parts. Further, he concluded, grasping the principles of a problem's solution would permit the transfer of that solution to other situations. Wertheimer advocated that "education should make . . . understanding, or perception of whole gestalten, its primary goal."[8] In direct conflict with the associationists, Wertheimer criticized the traditional use of repetitious drills. Because he was convinced of the ineffectiveness of learning derived only from blind repetition, Wertheimer emphasized what became one of the major aspects of Gestaltist philosophy--insight.

Insightful learning occurred "when an individual, in pursuing his purposes, sees new ways of utilizing elements of his environment, including his own bodily structure."[9] This description of insight was completely removed from the

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[8]Hill, p. 103.

[9]Morris L. Bigge, Learning Theories for Teachers, 2nd ed. (New York, 1971), p. 99.

thinking of the associationists, who had attempted to link certain stimuli to almost-mechanical responses which revealed new patterns of behavior that, in turn, were defined as learning. To the Gestalt-field psychologist, the process of learning was at once imaginative, deliberate, adventurous, and creative. Based on the premises of conceptualization and thought, the learning process became a matter of "nonmechanical development or change of insight."[10] Discovering solutions which form new relationships and experiences, one first recognized "hunches" which could develop into interpretations of one's self and one's environment, and form a major theoretical foundation for insightful learning. Such patterns of recognition and interpretation of one's own condition of life were conspicuous aspects of Bertolt Brecht's thinking about the educational impact of drama and theatre.

Developed by Mach, von Ehrenfels, and particularly Wertheimer, with his "laws" of organization and perception (see Chapter I), the theories of Gestaltism furnished a broad platform from which to launch the work of two of Wertheimer's closest associates and most dedicated disciples, Kurt Koffka (1886-1941) and Wolfgang Kohler (1887-1967). With Wertheimer, Koffka and Kohler formed what became known as the Berlin School, the most influential advocates of Gestaltist theory. Each man wrote about different aspects of Gestalt

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[10] Ibid., p. 100.

theory, but they agreed in their basic concepts of perception and learning. In particular, they emphasized "organized wholes, separated from other wholes but united within themselves by their dynamic patterning."[11] Koffka and Kohler were instrumental in the spread of Gestalt psychology throughout Europe and the United States. Koffka's chief works were Perception: An Introduction to Gestalt-Theorie (1922), The Growth of the Mind (1927), and Principles of Gestalt Psychology (1935), while Kohler wrote The Mentality of Apes (1925).

The major tenets of Wertheimer's Gestaltism were delineated by his disciples. Koffka focused on the trace theory that clarified the Gestaltist position on experience as a prerequisite of learning. According to Gestaltist thinking, learning resulted primarily from the working of forces evident in the field of a particular situation, as they were perceived by the learner. The capability to recognize the organization of the situational wholes, or gestalten, was founded on the learner's past experiences and the effects of those experiences on his nervous system. To the Gestaltist, this concept of memory traces furnished a standard for recognizing and evaluating the learning achieved through experiences. The effects of one's experiences established traces which were altered by subsequent experiences.

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[11]Hill, p. 94.

A system of constant changes and adjustments was thereby created. While new experiences could produce some of these changes, other changes also could result from the learner's continuous thinking or perhaps merely through the passage of time, as he spontaneously sought a "better gestalt." In the Brechtian concept of alienation, a major premise was the necessity for objective thinking which could be instrumental in the formulation of new parameters of life and in changes of behavioral patterns.

Wolfgang Kohler was particularly concerned with insight, perception, and learning. In The Mentality of Apes, he described his experiments with learning in chimpanzees. Through carefully controlled situations in which the primates learned to use sticks to reach bananas just beyond their grasp, Kohler determined that the animals succeeded best "when given the means by which to solve a problem involving the reorganization of experience through perceptualization."[12]

Thus, although Wertheimer originated the basic principles of Gestaltist psychology, Kohler added the bulk of the substance and significance to what is now known as Gestaltism. Using Wertheimer's original hypotheses, Kohler discovered that, because of the perceptual capabilities in

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[12]Louis P. Thorpe and Allen M. Schmuller, Contemporary Theories of Learning with Applications to Education and Psychology (New York, 1954), p. 223.

human organisms, the principal unity or wholeness seen in Gestalt philosophy was an essential element in all of nature. This oneness in all things, Kohler believed, was the key to determining the patterns of man's experiences and growth. From his studies in physics, Kohler concluded further that all events occurred in some field from which they obtained their individual characteristics. He then described learning "as a process in which inherent patterns are recognized within fields of different sizes. Central to this thesis . . . is the concept of the learner as a figure striving in the midst of diverse forces (field), to exist."[13]

Through various experiments with chimpanzees, Kohler demonstrated their ability to reorganize familiar objects (the sticks) into usable implements with which they could secure their objectives (the bananas). Kohler's critics decried many of the devices and techniques he had used, particularly his comparison of the chimpanzees to humans in matters of cognition and insight, and his "artificially prepared" experimental situations that were followed by an interpretation of the behavior that fit Kohler's own definition and standards too neatly. Despite these negative reactions, Kohler continued to believe that he had seen evidence of insightful learning by his subjects.

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[13]Ibid., p. 222.

Through the influence of Kohler, insight became a familiar and prominent part of the Gestaltist theory. Indeed, Hill described it as "the most important contribution . . . to our understanding of learning. . . . Such learning is likely to be especially resistant to forgetting and especially easy to transfer to new situations."[14] In Bertolt Brecht's thinking, insight was less a means of remembering and more a device for the audience to use when transferring the social conditions and situations encountered by the characters in Brecht's plays to the audience's world of everyday existence.

Unlike Wertheimer, Koffka, and Kohler, Kurt Lewin (1890-1947), a native of Germany who in 1935 fled the menace of Nazism and settled in America, focused Gestaltism on human motivation, personality, and social psychology. Lewin considered psychology a field of study and experimentation with a close similarity to everyday life, and he developed a new form of field theory. Wanting a system of theories which could actually predict the motivation and behavior of a particular individual at a given moment, Lewin theorized that behavior became "a matter of interaction of the individual and his environment governed by the stern necessity of survival and subject to the same laws which are implicit in the universe."[15] He converted his thinking to a mathematical

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[14]Hill, p. 95. [15]Thorpe and Schmuller, p. 233.

formula, B=f(P,E), which stated that behavior was equal to the functioning of a person and his environment. The result of this extensive study of the individual and his environment was a comprehensive philosophy of "life space."

> Life space is a scientific formulation of a series of nonrecurring but overlapping situations, each replete with its unique propensities and relationships. It is developed for the purpose of (1) expressing what is possible and impossible in the life of a person and (2) anticipating what is likely to occur. It represents the total pattern of factors or influences that affect an individual's behavior at a certain moment, or longer juncture of time.[16]

Lewin incorporated concepts from mathematics and physics into the formation of his topological and vector psychology to explain and support his theories of "psychological reality in terms of field relationships of a person and his psychological environment,"[17] or life space. Topology came from geometry, where it meant concepts of inside, outside, and boundary, having no connection with length, width, or depth. Vector was borrowed from mechanical physics; it referred to a force or influence that determined movement to or from a goal and suggested what was occurring or was likely to occur in the future. Another term involved in topological and vector psychology was valence, or the positive or negative values of objects found in an organism's life space. Those objects which were attractive to the individual because they helped fulfill a psychological need, were designated as positive

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[16]Bigge, p. 186.

[17]Ibid., p. 183.

valences; those objects which repelled, threatened, or prevented the fulfillment of a psychological need were negative valences.

Lewin's concept of "equilibrium" which existed between each individual and his environment would have been particularly helpful to Brecht. When that equilibrium was disturbed, Lewin postulated, a state of tension indicated a personal need. To relieve the tension, the individual moved toward those valences which might help restore the equilibrium. Lewin concluded that human behavior was determined by a cyclical pattern of rising tension, movement, and stability.

The life space construct of Lewin may be related to Brecht's theories of drama and theatre on two major levels. First, Brecht's characters were involved in an ever-changing life space. Tensions rose and fell around them; some characters would initiate movement toward their goals, while others accepted their conditions with resignation. Equilibrium became a much desired, but always elusive goal. Those who struggled to regain equilibrium realized their environments could be improved, and it was their stories which Brecht sought to portray. Second, the members of the audiences who attended performances of Brecht's dramas were shown the labors of the characters in such a way as to urge them to comprehend their own environments. Also, they were

made to realize that their conditions of life were subject to and capable of improvement, and, most importantly, they possessed the ability to initiate a movement toward improvement.

Brecht's Dramatic Theories and Gestaltism

Although the stimulus-response theories of learning did not appear applicable to Brecht's concepts of drama, the Gestaltist views developed by Wertheimer, Koffka, and Kohler might almost have been conceived with Brecht's plays in mind. Each play, that is, might be treated as a manifestation of Gestaltist learning theories.

A commonality seemed to have existed between these theories and the pedagogical concepts inherent in Brecht's drama theory.

The terms used to describe Brecht's dramatic works--"epic theatre," "gestus," "alienation effect"--produced more confusion than clarity about his drama theory. The best description of the dramatic theories of Brecht, in A Short Organum for the Theatre, did not appear until all of his major works had been written. From the first of his career, Brecht had observed that the theatre was designed primarily for the purpose of entertainment. Such a viewpoint could offer no real challenge to the theatregoing public of the mid-twentieth century unless Brecht's definition of pleasure in the theatre was somehow unique.

This uniqueness came from Brecht's rebellion against illusionism which, during the nineteenth century, had become totally dominant in the European theatre. Since Brecht had always been a rebel, he had no qualms about seeking artistic innovation. By the time he began drafting his theories, however, Brecht had already participated in several styles of illusionist theatre and even written some of his early plays with characteristics of the Expressionist movement. Convinced by these experiments that illusion, representational performance, and character identification were both distasteful and unacceptable, Brecht advocated that "the theatre must do its best to destroy in the bud any illusion of reality, which will continuously, and mischievously, tend to arise."[18]

Yet history provided the settings for many of Brecht's dramas. Historical events were a particularly rich source of unusual entertainment that offered "all the many sorts of representation of happenings between humans which the theatre has made since ancient times, and . . . which have given entertainment despite their incorrectness and improbability."[19] Lives enriched by exposure to the past offered opportunities to establish new memory traces when placed in contact with the present environment. Brecht wrote:

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[18]Esslin, p. 131.

[19]Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," p. 182.

> Our enjoyment of old plays becomes greater, the more we can give ourselves up to the new kind of pleasures better suited to our time. To that end we need to develop the historical sense (needed also for the appreciation of new plays) into a real sensual delight. When our theatres perform plays of other periods they like to annihilate distance, fill in the gap, gloss over the differences. But what comes then of our delight in comparisons, in distance, in dissimilarity--which is at the same time a delight in what is close and proper to ourselves?[20]

Not only were the spectators to be regaled by the past, they had to note the prevailing conditions of the historical past, with the changes wrought in succeeding years, and apply the principles to the present situation. For Brecht, the illusionist theatre of his day was merely depicting the past, but in no way was it indicating to the spectators the necessity for learning any lessons. "The theatre as we know it shows the structure of society (represented on the stage) as incapable of being influenced by society (in the auditorium)."[21] To Brecht, this idea was barbaric and catastrophic, and thus had to be discarded.

The field of theatrical performance was to maintain its quality of historicity, free from revision and disguise, with no attempt made to cause it to appear contemporary. Rather, the historical context was to be created authentically by the characters who were eventually to alter it. The struggles of

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[20]Brecht, "Appendices to the Short Organum," p. 276.

[21]Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," p. 189.

the characters were to be historically accurate, and were to depict truthful behavior "according to circumstances and his class."[22]

The figures, or characters, in the field of Brecht's dramas were not completely realized personages, when compared to the characters in the illusionistic theatre. Just as Brecht specified that the stage settings were to reveal a quality of incompletion and suggestion, so he wanted the characters to be broad, generalized sketches of individuals lacking many details that the audience could insert. A sense of divergence and contradiction had to be evident between the characters the audience expected to see and the ones who actually appeared. The abrasive, sometimes distracting result was similar to "a man standing in a valley and making a speech in which he occasionally changes his views or simply utters sentences which contradict one another, so that the accompanying echo forces them into confrontation."[23]

This "coming to grips" with the complication portrayed began what Brecht referred to as his "alienation effect" (A-effect):

> The old A-effects quite remove the object represented from the spectator's grasp, turning it into something that cannot be altered; the new are not odd in themselves, though the unscientific eye stamps anything strange as odd. The new alienations are only designed to free socially-conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today.[24]

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[22] Ibid., p. 191. [23] Ibid. [24] Ibid., p. 192.

That is, although the spectator may think he recognizes the subject, at the same time it seems less familiar.

The more thoroughly a spectator perceives the historical milieu (the field) in which a character (the figure) functions, the more understanding the spectator will attain regarding his own position and responsibility. Consequently, he will understand the nature of the changes needed to improve the condition of his life, and possibly the means to accomplish the changes.

Brecht's concept of gestus also supported the Gestaltist view that one must perceive the whole of a situation in order to understand the parts. Gestus, as a device for analysis and understanding, designated the fundamental motive and attitude assumed by each of the characters toward the other.

> These expressions of a gest are usually highly complicated and contradictory, so that they cannot be rendered by any single word and the actor must take care that in giving his image the necessary emphasis he does not lose anything, but emphasizes the entire complex.
>
> The actor masters his character by paying critical attention to its manifold utterances, as also to those of his counterparts and of all the other characters involved.[25]
>
> Splitting . . . material into one gest after another, the actor masters his character by first mastering the "story." It is only after walking all round the entire episode that he can, as it were by a single leap, seize and fix his character, complete with all its individual features.[26]

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[25] Ibid., p. 198.

[26] Ibid., p. 200.

The insight gained by the spectators was thus facilitated and enhanced by the study of all the nuances, inconsistencies, and individual features of the characters portrayed.

As the actors prepared for performances of Brecht's plays, they were made to determine the gest of a particular moment before proceeding to delineate their own character's contributions to that moment. These gestic contributions were to be totally intellectualized and devoid of emotional involvement. The actors were to "achieve" insight into a condition, and then perform it as if they were stepping aside, technically displaying the character caught in a gestic moment. The "stepping aside" by the actor permitted him to give an account of the situation rather than perform in it, and by viewing the character from the outside, according to Brecht's thinking, he facilitated the audience's remaining objective and mentally alert. If the spectators were caught up in the vicarious subjective emotions of the performance, they would become anesthetized by the purgation of the emotions, and would remain uninstructed and unimproved. Their problems could not be solved, and they would in no way be benefitted.

Surely this need to involve the audience directly in the play was one of the most original and controversial parts of Brecht's theory of the theatre. Since the time of Greek tragedy, playwrights had believed that the audience was to be

riveted and then emotionally manipulated by a performance. Brecht, on the other hand, thought the audience should be emotionally detached from both the performance and the characters. This placed him into an immediate conflict with the tenet of psychology which stressed the importance of empathetic identification in effective communication.

Brecht wanted his audiences to feel free to pull themselves away from the characters and observe with a critic's eye the events from an earlier historical period. Only then could the audience see the whole condition of the stage, and comprehend the narration and the problems described.

Although Brecht achieved a modicum of success with his dramas and their staging, he was never able to control his audiences completely. They continued to respond empathetically to the characters onstage.

Brecht labored to gain acceptance for his theoretical form of theatre, hoping that his would be the theatre for the "scientific" age of the 1950's and '60's. He felt his "epic" theatre was the most suitable form for Marxism, and spent most of his life striving toward this goal. The members of the Communist Party, however, were not so inclined. Therefore, shortly before his death, Brecht suggested changing "epic theatre" to "dialectical theatre," seeking stronger and more open approval from the Marxist authorities.

Gestalten in Brechtian Dramas

No documented evidence exists to support the idea that Brecht received any genuine indoctrination in the Gestaltist theories. It is safe to assume, however, that since Brecht's plays were noted for their universal implications, they would attempt to manipulate the Gestalt of their spectators. That is, though the scenes were each placed in specific locations at given points of the historical past, the significance of the dramatic environment was prominently presented, and the characters were pitted against unusual adversaries in recognizable forms. Even if the fields and figures were familiar, the tempers of the encounters could hardly have been considered traditional or ordinary. If Brecht was at least familiar with the field theories of Wertheimer, Koffka, Kohler, and Lewin, then he might well have been applying these theories as he "taught" his audiences. In this section, selected portions of ten plays by Brecht, representing his major periods of productivity, will be analyzed in terms of the three major aspects of Gestaltist theory--perception, insight and life space.

Perception

The plays written in Brecht's earliest period, 1918-1924, were dominated by descriptions and scenes of decay, illness, death, and animalistic behavior. Nihilism and cynicism permeated his writings to such a degree that all

natural elements and human qualities were depicted as gross perversions of human life. The title character in Baal, for example, reveled in the destructive powers of humanity without responsibility. In Scene 2, during an encounter with his young disciple Johannes, Baal illustrated his evaluation of a life which had been soured by excess.

> JOHANNES. You agree, don't you: the union of bodies is a filthy thing?
> BAAL. That's just the grunting of the pigs who can't make it. When you clasp those virgin hips, in the fear and ecstasy of a created being, you will become God. Just as the holly tree has many roots, all entwined together, so the two of you in the one bed have many limbs, and your hearts beat in your breasts and the blood flows in your veins.
> JOHANNES. But the law punishes it. As do parents.
> BAAL. Your parents are a thing of the past. Rotting teeth in their mouths. How can they open such mouths against love, which can be the death of any of us? If love is too much for you, you vomit yourselves up.
> JOHANNES. She gets pregnant, you mean?
> BAAL. When summer swims off, mild and pale, they have already sucked up love like sponges, and they've turned back into animals, childish and wicked, with fat bellies and dripping breasts, completely shapeless, and with wet, clinging arms like slimy squids. And their bodies disintegrate, and are sick unto death. And with a ghastly outcry, as if a new world were on the way, they give birth to a small piece of fruit. They spit out in torment what once they had sucked up in lust. One must have teeth. Then love's like biting into an orange when the juice squirts in your teeth.[27]

The irony of the dramatic environment in Baal was intensified by the fact that Baal was an artist--a poet, a musician, and a singer--who degraded his art with a life of drunkenness,

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[27]Bertolt Brecht, "Baal," Baal, A Man's A Man, and The Elephant Calf: Early Plays by Bertolt Brecht, edited by Eric Bentley (New York, 1964), p. 27.

laziness, selfishness, and ruthlessness. He died abandoned by all men and totally desolate.

In Baal, then, one saw drunkenness from liquor, sex, or murder. The effect of the liquor further distorted his conscience and his views of life; the sexual involvements showed man in his primitive, unadorned condition, with no sense of justification or excuse. In the several acts of murder, Baal revealed the tragedy of destroying that which was irreplaceable--his humanity--as he thus reduced himself to the status of an animal. Since no human communication was possible in such a situation, an attitude that embraced even genocide came into being.

Such consummate negativism denied any possible objectivity or hope of improvement. As Baal lay dying in a filthy bed, finally realizing his demise was imminent, his jeering comrades, in a rapid sequence of insouciant desertion, left him to solitary contemplation of the brighter, happier life outside his bleak, dingy room.

In Baal, unity in nature was almost nonexistent. Indeed, all created beings deteriorated into chaotic spasms of perversion, rape, and brawling. Contrasting scenes of darkness and comparative brightness helped dramatize the conflicting views of life that the diverse characters experienced. In Scene 6, a night scene, the audience could sense the immensity of the dissonances of nature in Baal's exultation of love, "The sky is black, and we are on a swing with

love inside us, and the sky is black. I love you."[28] The juxtaposition of the desirable with the unexpected was common in Baal, as the spectators' sensitivities were jarred by the surprising images. Visions of greed and lust were intermixed with snarling exchanges of contempt and frustration, depicting a state of decomposition which could not be avoided. In Baal's description of his frequent washings in the river, the spectator perceived the desperation and futility of a sinful existence while the sinner remained unrepentant. Corruption resulted from Baal's every encounter, whether "white bodies" of poor females, other animals, or vegetation.

Baal's sardonic attitude toward religion and "the white body of Jesus Christ" portrayed the uselessness of Christianity. The godless seed, which later grew into Nazism, could be discerned in the chaos and division of the society in which Baal and his comrades struggled.

Brecht's next major work of his early period, Drums in the Night, unlike its predecessor, proposed an environmental field of familiar and recent history. The weakness and immaturity of the German army created difficult moments for everyone as it attempted to break the control of the Russian White Guards in the "Spartakus" uprising. The entire populace held no respect or thoughts of heroism for the soldiers;

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[28] Ibid., p. 49.

everyone was regarded as so much raw meat in the process of spoiling.

The spectators could have sensed the cynicism frequently mouthed by characters such as Mr. Balicke, the father of Anna, who sermonized as he celebrated Anna's betrothal to one of the rebellious soldiers:

> BALICKE (raising his glass). Here's health to the couple! (Clinks glasses.) These are shaky times. The war's over. . . . Demobilization is flooding the oases of peaceful toil with disorder, greed, and bestial inhumanity. . . . Uncertain livelihoods are on the increase: respectable but shady. The cataclysm. The agitated masses lack ideals. But worst of all--I may say it here--are the soldiers back from the front: spoiled adventurers run wild who've forgotten how to work and hold nothing sacred. Hard times indeed; a man's worth his weight in gold. Get a good grip on him, Annie. Make sure you come through, but stick together. Always onward and upward! Your health![29]

The loss of personal relationships in Drums in the Night dramatically paralleled Germany's loss of national relationships as a result of ineffective government leadership which stressed only the strength found in wealth. The audiences could have perceived, however, that affairs of the heart and conscience were damaged or destroyed by inordinate emphasis on money. Toward the end of the play, the spectators had to endure the hero's angry tirade for permitting themselves to become so misled and deterred from their goals in life. He ordered them to dismiss all involvements and remember where they were and what they had seen:

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[29]Bertolt Brecht, "Drums in the Night," Jungle of Cities and Other Plays (New York, 1966), p. 105.

> KRAGLER. Cheap theatricals, that's all it is. There's some boards and a paper moon and a butcher shop in back--that's the only real part. . . . The bagpipes play, the poor die among newspapers, houses fall down on them, morning dawns, they lie like drowned cats on the pavement, . . . The shouting will be over tomorrow morning but I'll be lying in bed tomorrow and multiplying myself so as not to perish from the earth.[30]

In the Jungle of the Cities, also written during this early period of pessimism and cynicism, depicted a society which was being torn asunder by the irrational and unmotivated machinations of the powers of good (Garga) and evil (Schlink). Set in Chicago in 1912, In the Jungle of the Cities focused on conflicting philosophies about the price of honor and liberty. Garga would never have dissipated the significance of his own thinking under any circumstances. Schlink, on the other hand, would have evaded any and all responsibilities in order to be completely free, and would have derived much pleasure merely from the processes of evasion and resistance. Once having found liberty, however, Schlink discovered it to be untenable and burdensome; he determined to conclude his life in despair and confusion. The absurdity and vanity of the human condition would have given the spectator a contradictory portrait of the values inherent in the conflict between humanity and material wealth. Capitulation to a philosophy of human devaluation and merchandising would have been perceived as shockingly

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[30] Ibid., p. 161.

similar to Nazism. The conditions in the historical periods being portrayed with no enhancement or distortion became reference points for the instruction of the spectators.

Two plays that spanned the years from 1924 to 1933--The Threepenny Opera and The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny--apparently were motivated by Brecht's struggle against the rise of Hitler and the Nazi regime. Both of these works focused on people whose perceptions of their own environmental conditions were filled with ironic parody.

Brecht described the basic construct for The Threepenny Opera in his notebook:

> The Threepenny Opera deals with bourgeois conceptions, not only as content by representing them, but also by the way in which they are presented. It is a sort of summary of what the spectator in the theatre wishes to see of life. Since however he sees, at the same time, certain things that he does not wish to see and thus sees his wishes not only fulfilled but also criticized (he sees himself not as a subject, but as an object), he is, in theory, able to give the theatre a new function. . . . Complex seeing must be practiced. Though thinking about the flow of the play is more important than thinking from within the flow of the play.[31]

Yet middle-class audiences viewed the story of the problems of the lower classes with such misunderstanding that they failed to see the subjects of the play were themselves. They viewed the proceedings with tolerant amusement, not openly admitting to their perceptions of their own fallacious way of life, but probably sensing in the whirling

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[31]Bertolt Brecht, "Notes on 'The Threepenny Opera,'" Bertolt Brecht: Plays (London, 1965), p. 178.

catastrophic world of The Threepenny Opera a harking to their hopes and dreams for Germany.

The Threepenny Opera offered a graphic depiction of human relationships, in which the characters sought only self-preservation. They sacrificed those things which were usually considered most precious--spouses, family, friends--just to be certain they would be permitted to live. Each man at the time of death, of course, is always alone, and nothing can save him. A description of such a "departure" developed into a lament which included the message of "sermon" of the play. Peachum became the work's foremost mouthpiece with a pessimistic assessment of life, and a bitter evaluation of man's condition in "The Song of the Futility of All Human Endeavor."

A man lives by his head.
That head will not suffice
Just try it: you will find your head
Will scarce support two lives.
  For the task assigned them
  Men aren't smart enough or sly
  Any rogue can blind them
  With a clever lie.

Go make yourself a plan
And be a shining light
Then make yourself a second plan
For neither will come right.
  For the situation
  Men aren't bad enough or vile.
  Human aspiration
  Only makes me smile.

Go running after luck
But don't you run too fast:
We all are running after luck
And luck is running fast.

For the real conditions
Men are more demanding than is meet
Their ideal ambitions
Are one great big cheat.[32]

This picture of man against the world contained some of the most potent phrases to stimulate the thinking of the audience concerning their hapless lots. Since everything positive was futile, the possibility for any success was remote. The whole field of man's endeavors presented little opportunity for an honorable life; only lying, cheating, and lack of civility received approval. The audience was told that because the world was inherently bad, virtues such as love, compassion, and loyalty were useless and would work against them. Thus a boxing ring was set up in which the figure would struggle against the field.

Throughout his life Brecht was a scrapper. His occasional acquaintance with habitues of the boxing world--from promoters and managers to trainers and fighters--led him to use images from their world in his plays. Often the boxing ring was used as the scenic environment; audience reactions and attitudes resembling those of spectators at a boxing match were called for. In The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, the audience would have perceived a condition of anarchy, not in some early historical period but in the present day (1929). The primary source of man's difficulties was seen to be money (not "love of money," as in the Bible). The

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[32] Ibid., p. 160.

city of Mahagonny was ephemeral and was based on the concept of total estrangement; no permanent relationships were encouraged or permitted. Deception and mistrust abounded, and the central statement from Brecht centered on the philosophy of the destructiveness of alcohol, money, and sex. One man, Paul Ackermann, strove to correct the ills of Mahagonny, but his attempts were doomed because the general prevailing attitude was "live and let live" in an unrestrained society. Thus, Ackermann ordered that four commandments would rule Mahagonny: eat, love, fight, and drink.

> One means to eat all you are able;
> Two, to change your loves about;
> Three means the ring and gaming table;
> Four, to drink until you pass out.
> Moreover, better get it clear
> That Don'ts are not permitted here.
> Moreover, better get it clear
> That Don'ts are not permitted here.[33]

The downfall of Mahagonny and Ackermann was a lack of money. Ackermann had indulged in the excesses of his commandments and had gambled much of his money on his friends. When he could no longer meet his obligations, he was quickly tried, found guilty, and electrocuted. The brutal abandonment of Paul Ackermann produced an intellectual impact that shocked the spectator without arousing emotion.

The third play from Brecht's Marxist period, The Mother, showed a different approach. The spectator was led to

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[33]Bertolt Brecht, The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, translated by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman (Boston, 1976), p. 68.

perceive a beautiful and loving mother, Pelagea, caught in the proletarian struggle in Russia. The problems she had to face helped the spectator gain a fuller sense of the conditions under which she lived. Her maternal inclinations led her to an understanding of the larger perspective that was deeper than the average person would have felt.

Thus, although most of the women in Brecht's plays endured a ruptured relationship with their families, Pelagea was the first of several Brechtian females who, in subsequent works written while he was in exile, struggled for both survival and world peace. Three out of four major works from 1933 to 1947--Mother Courage and Her Children, The Good Woman of Setzuan, and The Caucasian Chalk Circle--dealt with these themes.

Mother Courage and Her Children told a story which was set in the years from 1618 to 1648, a devastating period for Germany. The Thirty Years War brought such total destruction that it left a country that was culturally deprived, morally blind, and economically bankrupt. In such an atmosphere, Brecht presented a transient sutler woman riding a canteen wagon filled with provisions for an army in the field. Accompanying her were two sons and a mute daughter. The sons served as the power for her wagon until they were slain while she was involved with her moneymaking adventures. Then her daughter was shot to death while she attempted to warn a

peaceful village that enemy soldiers were coming; her mother had gone to buy more provisions.

This mercenary "business-is-everything" attitude of Mother Courage created a pathetically hopeless situation which conveyed ominous warnings for Germany in the twentieth century. By 1939, after years of Nazi rule, the German people were led by Hitler into World War II. Blinded by fiery rhetoric and promises of glory, the people were unable to understand what was actually happening to them.

In Mother Courage and Her Children, Brecht wanted the members of the audience to perceive a woman and a mother who was so thoroughly distorted physically and mentally she was almost unrecognizable. She sought to provide for her family by working for a war which would destroy her family.

Scene 1 began this percept with a cynical expression from a Sergeant in the Swedish army.

> SERGEANT. What they could use round here is a good war. What else can you expect with peace running wild all over the place? You know what the trouble with peace is? No organization. When do you get organization? In a war. Peace is one big waste of equipment. Anything goes, no one gives a god damn. See the way they eat? Cheese on rye, bacon on the cheese? Disgusting! How many horses they got in this town? How many young men? Nobody knows! They haven't bothered to count 'em!! That's peace for you!! I been in places where they haven't had a war in seventy years and you know what? The people can't remember their own names! They don't know who they are! It takes a war to fix all that. In a war everyone registers, everybody's name's on a list, their shoes are stacked, their corn's in the bag, you count

> it all up--cattle, men, et cetera--and take it away! Yeah, that's the story--no organization, no war![34]

Throughout the play there were three elements of the story which directly addressed the spectator's perception. First, the war itself was omnipresent. Most scenes occurred in the ruins of earlier battles, and characters struggled vainly for some degree of comfort. Second, the canteen wagon of Mother Courage graphically portrayed the fortunes of war. In the opening scene, the wagon was filled with an elaborate display of the temporary wealth granted by the war. As the play continued, however, the spectators witnessed the pillaging and the destruction of the merchandise on the wagon, while Mother Courage carried on her declining business. Thus ravaged by the war, the wagon became a grim symbol of the devastation and poverty the war had produced. When her children were dead and she was alone and bankrupt, Mother Courage hitched herself into the harness of the wagon and pulled away to search for a new fortune. The third perceptual stimulus of importance was the figure of Mother Courage herself. Her "blindness," like that of false courage, was evident in her opening song in the prologue, which encouraged the officers to buy food and drink for their men if they wanted a good battle. Such reasoning was similar to the social and cultural deprivation, the material and

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[34]Bertolt Brecht, "Mother Courage and Her Children," Masters of Modern Drama, edited by Haskell M. Block and Robert G. Shedd (New York, 1962), p. 844.

economic bankruptcy, and the ethical and moral blindness that had prostrated the German people.

Like Mother Courage and Her Children, The Caucasian Chalk Circle took place in a world destroyed by war and carnage. Grusha, a young servant girl, worked for peace by being kind. The spectator was made to sense the burden such kindness placed on the doer. Faced with responsibility for a foundling child, Grusha dedicated her life to maintaining the safety and well-being of the child. In stark contrast was the Governor's Wife, the child's natural mother, who lacked nothing in material goods but whose maternal love was unable to overcome her greed. Grusha, who possessed nothing more than her name, understood the meaning of such love. The crass covetousness of the child's natural mother was thus counterposed against the kind gentility of Grusha. The audience could perceive in their conflict the idea that beauty would not be found in physical possessions, but only in a heart which is at peace.

While striving for the safety of the child Grusha had to commit murder. Though some audiences might be repulsed by the killing of the soldier who wanted to kidnap the child, the deed was honored by the final decision to permit Grusha to keep the child after the natural mother had laid claim on him.

Another time, by a glacier, Grusha performed a loving ritual with the child. In an act resembling the baptism of

Christianity, she removed the child's royal clothing and replaced it with more humble attire, thus making a new man of him. The act also established a sacred bond between Grusha and the child.

In the famous trial scene, taken almost intact from Brecht's source, the spectators actually witnessed a trial between opposing moral forces. The actual mother had abandoned her child; Grusha, through a series of dangers and sacrifices, made her claim for the child. Everything she attempted in her efforts to aid the child jeopardized her own escape and survival. Through her determination, the young girl eventually brought order out of the chaos and found peace, only to face a trial by the disorderly and cynical judge, Azdak.

Thus began one of the most paradoxical sequences in dramatic literature, as the traditional concepts of order were shown actually to be oppressive to the point of tyranny while the disordered thinking in the conduct of the trial was presented as correct human behavior. When Azdak utilized the test of Solomon to establish the identity of the real mother and the Governor's Wife refused to release the child and selfishly pulled him to her, Azdak determined that Grusha released her hold on him because of love, and thus deserved the child.

The conflict between the shepherds and the fruit growers, which originated the context of the play, was then

resolved in a manner similar to the judgment rendered in the story of Grusha. The Singer (Narrator) explained the resolution in the closing song of the play.

> Take note what men of old concluded:
> That what there is shall go to those who are good
> for it,
> Children to the motherly, that they prosper,
> Carts to good drivers, that they be driven well,
> The valley to the waterers, that it yield fruit.[35]

The cost of goodness and love was the subject of The Good Woman of Setzuan, a parable play set in the famine-ridden province of Setzuan. So desperate was the condition of Setzuan that men were driven to violent crime or perhaps suicide as they attempted to escape the exploitation of others.

The young prostitute, Shen Te, became the channel through which relief was to come. In the gods' gift of the tobacco shop, Shen Te gained the blessing of being able to help herself, and at the same time extend the hand of grace to others. As the play went on, however, the audience perceived that, despite her intentions to be helpful and generous, she soon became victimized by the miserable elements of the deprived populace.

Shen Te soon realized that in order to survive, she must destroy her own personality and invent a crusty, insensitive "cousin" named Shui Ta. The extreme goodness of Shen

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[35]Bertolt Brecht, "The Caucasian Chalk Circle," Parables for the Theatre: Two Plays by Bertolt Brecht (Minneapolis, 1948), p. 182.

Te was thus protected by the calculating coolness of her alter ego.

This split between two personalities in Brecht's works, according to Esslin, symbolized the conflict between reason and instinct.[36] Shen Te/Shui Ta was only Brecht's most striking and comprehensive example of this schizophrenic context. Unable to endure even the appearance of suffering, Shen Te gave her possessions to the poor around her; Shui Ta, on the other hand, exploited those around him for his own gain.

> As Shui Ta she denies her nature, in order to fulfill it as Shen Ta. As Shui Ta she must exploit and deceive her lover, to whom--as Shen Te--she gives herself without reservations. As Shui Ta she adjusts to and manipulates her environment which victimizes Shen Te. As Shui Ta she assures her survival which Shen Te recklessly endangers. As Shui Ta she safeguards her livelihood but cripples her life; as Shen Te she fulfills her life but forfeits her livelihood. Making a living swallows living; livelihood devours life. The means defeat the end they are to serve.[37]

The consequences of the split personality, therefore, were "a division between intelligence and stupidity, understanding and ignorance."[38]

The goal of the split-character milieu was to make the spectators perceive the destructive power of such

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[36]Esslin, p. 264.

[37]Walter H. Sokel, "Brecht's Split Characters and His Sense of the Tragic," Brecht: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Peter Demetz (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962), p. 128.

[38]Ibid., p. 130.

conditions. Lives were significantly affected, and sometimes physically crippled, but the strongest damage perceived by the audience was in the convolutions of human nature which produced sorrow and failure. Because of Shen Te's refusal to permit her son to know of Shui Ta, she denied one of the major goals of her life: to raise her son in an open, understanding atmosphere. As the play ended, Shen Te had to refuse to consent to the idealism expressed by the gods. She assumed the qualities of a tragic character, enduring conflict and frustration while maintaining contact with the truth.

The fourth of Brecht's major exile works, Galileo, can be considered his "last will and testament"; though it was begun in 1938, he was preparing a third version when he died. If the two complete versions of the work (dated 1938-39 and 1945-47) were compared, the textual differences in those passages which described Galileo's contributions to the scientific world would be evident. Rohrmoser stressed the impact of the atomic bomb on Brecht's later evaluation of scientific developments.[39]

The most signficant perceptions to be gleaned from performances of Galileo, however, pertained to the responsibilities imposed on the scientist, not only by his work but

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[39]Gunter Rohrmoser, "Brecht's Galileo," Brecht: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Peter Demetz (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962), p. 118.

also by its effect on the world. The exaltation of invention and discovery, the joy of beginning again, and satisfaction of rededicating oneself to a task, were all expressed in Brecht's words.

> Around the turn of this century no other line from a song so powerfully inspired the workers as the line: 'Now a new age is dawning'; old and young marched to it, the poorest, the down-and-outs and those who had already won something of civilization for themselves--all felt young. . . . Glorious is the feeling of beginning, of pioneering; the fact of being a beginner inspires enthusiasm. Glorious is the feeling of happiness in those who oil a new machine before it displays its strength, in those who fill in a blank space on an old map, in those who dig the foundation of a new home, their house.[40]

This celebration of new things was enhanced by the audience's perception of Galileo himself as a hero of complex and frequently intriguing qualities. He was a man of questions and contradictions who continually stopped to ponder the mysteries of the universe. Though he never doubted the fact of the universe, he struggled with his concept of man's role in it. Finding difficulty with the theory of the earth being in the center of the universe, he moved upward to the theories of Copernicus about the solar system. Religious leaders, philsophers of the court, merchants, and common folk rejected this change in theories as heretical, knowing that all theories of religion, economic conditions, and social structures could very easily fall into question. The

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[40]Bertolt Brecht, "The Author's Notes on 'The Life of Galileo,'" Bertolt Brecht: Plays (London, 1965), pp. 335-336.

confining conditions experienced by Galileo when he was pressured by higher authorities to deny his beliefs and publicize his recantation demonstrated for the audience the power of the human will when confronting adversity. Enduring the loss of longtime friends and associates, Galileo presented a gaunt but determined figure of an idea longing for expression. The audience received a powerful lesson on the irrefutability of truth as he wrote his Discorsi and smuggled an extra copy of the manuscript of his scientific truths past the ever-watchful Catholic authorities.

Insight

The concept of insight in Gestaltist theory suggested that the perceiver's purposes suddenly became realigned or that his attitude underwent change. The result would be a sudden burst of problem-solving.[41] Such a bold, creative, and deliberate process which would lead to the solution of a particular problem was certainly one of Brecht's goals when he was writing his plays. Indeed, seeking to improve man's condition and purpose was felt as a sacred responsibility Brecht assigned to himself.

Not all the plays under consideration, however, were concerned with problem-solving. Baal, Drums in the Night, and In the Jungle of the Cities--from Brecht's period of nihilism--were so subjective and cynical, so filled with

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[41]Bigge, p. 99.

weaknesses and fallacies of human behavior, that no solutions were possible. The indulgent, laissez-faire attitudes and behavior of Baal and many of his compatriots in crime resulted in despondency and death for those with whom Baal became involved. Violent arguments and drunken brawls were depicted in such a way as to sear the images into the minds of the spectators. Remembering the acts of destructive behavior and their tragic consequences etched the behaviors and their results into the minds of the viewers, whether or not it produced a comprehension which would help them avoid such conditions in their own lives. Baal's wanton excesses offered no comfort to anyone viewing a performance, however, and his succession of rapes and murders was only shocking. His cynical disdain for anything orderly or prearranged added to the interest of the performance.

Yet the shocking events portrayed in Baal could have pointed to an understanding that similar conditions could develop in any society which remained free of all forms of restraint. An immense vitality, as manifested by Baal, when linked with moral irresponsibility, led only to rejection and despair.

Drums in the Night showed this same approach to insight, but one extra plot ingredient appeared to set it apart: political considerations which were essentially antipolitical. Although the time of the "Spartakus" uprising was rife with revolution, Andrew Kragler, the protagonist, was more

interested in a life of alcohol and sex, refusing responsibility in a time of crisis.

Again, however, the problem-solving function of insight was virtually nonexistent though the violent conditions of the time were difficult to forget. The search for short-term happiness and satisfaction created problems rather than solving them. The brawling riot in the streets of Berlin served as a battleground for the releasing of individual frustrations and drives. Personal relationships were damaged or destroyed, and the fleeting moments of pleasure were only superficial indulgences. Spectators witnessing a performance of Drums in the Night undoubtedly received a disturbing portrayal of the problems of loyalty and dedication to the military machine of Germany, especially considering the defeat of Germany in World War I, but again no solutions to these problems were suggested.

In the Jungle of the Cities was the bitterest of these early plays. The lack of humanity in the relationship of Garga and Shlink was portrayed so powerfully that even negative contact and communication became desirable, and hateful relationships were preferred over no relationships at all.

Constructed as a stylized boxing match, with the characters participating in an expressionistic contest of psychological pugilism, the play developed along several lines, leaving the spectator adrift in the flow of events. The city of Chicago, for example, maligned in several of Brecht's

plays, was identifiable here only in name. The erroneous details about Chicago described in the script--such as taking a boat to Tahiti--were important solely because they represented places far away from Germany. The love relationships that began with arrangements based on revenge and professed love, evolved into marriages of convenience that ended in tragedy. As lives were prostituted for selfish gain, the characters were dispersed or deceased, and the city became a less tempestuous environment.

With The Threepenny Opera, a sharply satirical portrayal of lower classes that pointed clearly toward the middle classes, Brecht began seeking solutions through insight. Using The Beggar's Opera as a source, Brecht satirized conditions of the twentieth century, as the wild and raucous personalities found in the lower strata of society experienced their own brand of love, their own sense of justice and honor, and their own creed of morality. Attempting to eke out their day-to-day existence, they collided with the fragile quality of their relationships; carrying middle-class concerns to their extremes led only to a feeling of insecurity. This feeling could then give insight into the solution: change the middle-class concerns.

An important influence on this insight was Kurt Weill's score. In all his collaborations with Brecht, Weill attempted to create a musical form in which recognizable rhythms with unusual harmonies and unpredictable melody lines

reinforced the conflicts in the story. The cynical dissonances in the score of The Threepenny Opera--such songs as "The Moritat," for example, which opens the production, and "The Song of Solomon"--could be said to force a response that would perceive a need for a change.

This progression from an evil society to a good society by means of class struggle Brecht got from Karl Marx. The Threepenny Opera began Brecht's dramatic focusing on Marxist theories, although the lack of positive thinking related it to the earlier nihilistic plays. Yet despite this lack, The Threepenny Opera both entertained its audiences and gave them a considerable quantity of Marxist thinking.

This insight was more pronounced in The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, published one year after The Threepenny Opera. A powerful work both musically and intellectually, The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny told the story of a Utopian city founded purely for comfort and pleasure in such a way that the audience was made aware of the tensions inherent in modern society. Ordinary problems such as population growth, increased commerce, and frontier justice were solved in an extraordinary manner. In Mahagonny, Brecht and Weill sought to cause insight about a society which had been erected solely for material purposes, in which the major requirement for success and happiness was money. Having no money in the city of Mahagonny was a crime punishable by death.

As Mahagonny grew and flourished as a haven for outcasts, conditions deteriorated to such a degree that, as in the days of Noah, a purge of the earth had to occur. Yet a hurricane that blew through the regions around Mahagonny actually split and passed around the city. Things were in such a wretched condition that not even God would expend energy for its destruction.

The insight available from The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny was also felt by the city's inhabitants, who departed in sorrow and disillusionment from what was to have been the city of their dreams. Just as they could not do anything to help Ackermann (the man who was executed for being penniless), they realized they could not do anything for a city that was broke and dead. In the midst of a revival-demonstration, they encouraged each other to work collectively toward the establishment of a Golden Age.

This Marxist insight was especially important in the saga of Pelagea Vlassova in The Mother, an intense effort to depict a Russian character in a Russian environment. A passive figure, Pelagea remained at home caring for her son until he became a revolutionary at his metal shop. When he became involved in the revolutionary movement, she projected herself into the conflict for the sake of the "cause," only to lose her son by execution for escaping from prison.

One of Brecht's strongest didactic plays, The Mother, described a character who possessed great capacity for human

involvement, but lacked the education or stamina to complete her participation in the revolution. Mother Courage and Her Children, however, contained a much more profound use of problem-solving insight. The problem of war in a war-making society, in which the conflict was merely an extreme form of profiteering, was obvious. But the solution was not so simple. Neither the courage to survive in such a society nor the bravery needed to sacrifice oneself for a different world succeeded. Only giving one's life for others without hope of success was shown to be a possible way out of the conundrum. Mother Courage lost all but did not sacrifice all, and certainly her own survival alone was shown to be a questionable solution. The clear-cut answers of Marxism gave way to the less certain solution inherent in sacrificing oneself to one's fellows. This was a strangely Christian insight from so Marxist a playwright. But perhaps the truly Christian solution would be the most revolutionary of all. Certainly, as Brecht well knew, it had never been tried by an entire society or culture.

What an entire culture was about to attempt in 1939, of course, was World War II. Mother Courage and Her Children showed that the responsibility for the conflict was people who helped create a climate for the growth and control of Nazism. Mother Courage's behavior illustrated, particularly to the German population, the disorder that could result from

attempts to derive a living from the war while contributing nothing to halt it.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle (1945), however, with its origins in Chinese folklore, sought to cause insight about two problems: a conflict between two collective farms and a confrontation between the two women who held claim to the child. In both instances, the decision was made to benefit the parties who had provided compassion and care to the subjects of the disputes. The play attempted to blend the moral aspects of each case with the legal aspects. The law was characterized as an essential element in a perfectly classless society; it represented all persons equally. The drunken hermit Azdak was permitted to establish his jurisdiction, therefore, imperfect as it was, for all to observe and evaluate. Though he did not lack wisdom, what he had was tainted by the bitterness of a disillusioned intellectual. His actions thus displayed the typical character trait of a Brechtian scoundrel: cowardice. It may be conjectured that the audience gained insight into the impact of the law on human transactions.

Drawing upon Chinese folklore and theatre one more time, Brecht wrote The Good Woman of Setzuan in 1942 as a study of man's inhumanity to man through exploitation. The story emphasized the problems of Shen Te, a prostitute of imprudent generosity. The difficulty a good person had living in a less than perfect world was stressed through a series of

episodes depicting the selfishness of a demanding landlady, two burdensome strangers with their nephew, an unscrupulous unemployed aviator, and a wealthy, amorous old barber. Shen Te offered these acquaintances of her as much help as she could while maintaining her own existence. To save herself, she invented a cousin, Shui Ta, who was her opposite: harsh, objective, business-minded, aggressive, and dominating. The society in which Shen Te/Shui Ta existed held no hope for happiness, and though the three gods who came to earth to offer assistance were curious about humanity's condition, they showed little determination to offer any relevant form of aid.

Thus The Good Woman of Setzuan offered its audience an insight into the futility of man's searching for assistance beyond humanity. The three gods--by their ineptitude, absurdity, and obstinacy--despaired at the prospect and rose to heaven on a pink cloud. After being abandoned by the gods, Shen Te asked for the audience to help devise a solution to this dilemma. The rather obvious response, according to Brecht, would have been revolution that would produce a world in which men could be good and still survive, only Brecht also showed that good men may be destroyed by their goodness.

Even the perfect intellectual hero was not exempt. Galileo (1939) showed the necessity for scientific objectivity which led men to experiment with new ideas and new

procedures. In addition, men had to accept the consequences of what they discovered. Against the tide of religious and political power, Galileo strove to prove his theories while simultaneously satisfying his physical and mental needs. Thus having to rely on money from private tutoring sessions with mostly mediocre students--when he wanted to conduct further research into his theories concerning the solar system--collided with Galileo's need for secret experiments. Since the political and religious authorities considered any new or unorthodox theory of science contrary to religious teaching and politically subversive, Galileo's study of the universe--including his false claim to the discovery of the telescope--made him a symbol of the masses' struggle for social progress. Any tactics that would assure victory would be permissible, and Galileo became a tragic hero who, against all odds and forsaken by friends and family, resisted the Inquisition until his fear of torture caused him to retract his theories. Only after his secret writings were smuggled from Italy to the other countries of Europe and the world did Galileo's great contribution to human knowledge elevate him above the level of the cowardice he had revealed by his recantation of his views about the solar system.

Life Space

The theories of Kurt Lewin found a strong if unconscious advocate in Bertolt Brecht. The frequent call for a change

in the environment was evident in his plays, and the major tenets of Lewin's philosophy were precisely what the conditions during the three major periods of Brecht's writing required.

The Lewin concept most frequently a part of Brecht's plays was "life space"--that is, each person's society. Brecht was concerned about one's responsibility to society: communicating with persons and responding to objects, indulging in private intellectual contemplations, reducing physiological tensions, and satisfying his psychological needs such as the setting and seeking of goals. The early decades of the twentieth century in Germany put the individual and the state itself through severe tests. After World War I, those who had survived in Germany were hungry, destitute, and greatly confused as they tried to resurrect their nation. As the physical oppressions intensified, the people turned to things artistic. They sought refuge in an ideal world which was not available in the real world. While some people dreamed of restructuring their fragmented country, others remained downcast and defeated; they wallowed in cynicism, unfocused defiance, and occasionally open rebellion.

Newly-wrought artistic movements each tried to portray the mixed-up times. Of these--dadaism, futurism, surrealism, and expressionism--the most successful at that moment was expressionism, which stressed the Absolute Ego, i.e., the

"I," as man's creative center. In this mode, Brecht wrote Baal, Drums in the Night, and In the Jungle of the Cities. The life space portrayed in Baal was a vague and distorted Augsburg, described by Ewen as "a return to Nature, to its primal algae and weeds, to its animal existence, . . . a world of living people, working men, bourgeois, thieves, harlots, the declassed, the male and female lovers, a world of instinctual and primitive desires and passions."[42] Such locales as the river Lech, the inns and taverns of Augsburg, and surrounding pastoral areas dominated the play, and Wiedeli believed Brecht intended Baal not "to propose an ideal way of life for us, but rather to follow an experience through to its absurd conclusion."[43] Thus, the spectators were not subject to instruction, but only a social environment unmistakably similar to their own and perhaps all the more identifiable because of the locales depicted. The spectators' life space was dramatized, and the shock of recognition was intended to make them strive for a change.

Drums in the Night, however, a drama of much broader scope than Baal, focused on both Berlin and all of Germany in the early 1920's. Everywhere in this dramatic environment one could sense a need for revolution. The plight of Andreas

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[42]Frederic Ewen, Bertolt Brecht: His Life, His Art, and His Times (New York, 1967), p. 95.

[43]Walter Weideli, The Art of Bertolt Brecht (New York, 1963), p. 7.

Kragler, for example, home from the chaos of war only to find chaos in the streets, and to have his attempts at reestablishing his betrothal to Anna interrupted by gunfire from the "Spartakus" rioters, was such that "consolation" could be found only in alcohol and lust. This limitation intensified Kragler's despair, though he maintained his intentions to marry Anna and "replenish the race," despite the harshness of the environment in which they would live. The life space in the play was exactly like that in Berlin and Germany, and the impulse to strive for a change in the life space would no doubt have been stimulated in the minds of the spectators. No call to action or summarizing moral was included as part of Brecht's script, however; he left the contemplation and the decision-making to his audience.

The same observation would fit In the Jungle of the Cities. Setting the play in Chicago allowed Brecht to keep his audiences "alienated" from the emotional impact of the story. The "Chicago" in the play was developed from Brecht's imagination, however, stimulated by several novels of the time.[44] After World War I, the German image of America combined the reality of the war, the occupation troops, and the devalued mark with a dream about American "open spaces," "frontier" conditions, and thriving cities. The post-war

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[44]Anselm Hollo, "Translator's Notes for In the Jungle of the Cities," Jungle of the Cities and Other Plays (New York, 1966), p. 9.

hysteria in Europe was seen as similar to the panic caused by ruthless criminal elements in America. The inestimable wealth and power of America, as perceived by the Germans, provided the potential for unending adventure and mystery, and it was this fantasized "life space" which In the Jungle of the Cities depicted. Seeing awesome problems of personal and social relationships in a faraway country like America undoubtedly captivated Brecht's audiences. Even with characters whose names were hardly typical of those in America, the comparison between the two countries was inescapable.

The late 1920's--the years leading to The Threepenny Opera and The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny--saw Brecht begin a study of Marxism which eventually became a major influence on his life and work. New forces, primarily Marxist in origin, conflicted with the class structure. Left to themselves to build fantasy worlds which would enhance their own difficult existences, the lower classes developed the hypocrisy, cynicism, and snobbery which became their trademarks. As political and economic difficulties began to build, these attitudes coalesced into resignation. Heavy clouds of suspicion and distrust were magnified by the publication of a blacklist developed by Hitler and the Nazis. The increase in cynicism in all social strata was intensified by the gloomy desperation of a dominated people. Thus, when The Threepenny Opera appeared, the satirical thrust of Brecht and Weill's work was misread, and, in a rush of judgment, the

viewers felt insulted and outraged at the immorality and mocking attitudes of the characters. In their rapidly-spinning and -developing world, which was beginning its approach to catastrophe, the Germans' fragile sophistication did not comprehend the critical purpose of the aggressive harshness in Brecht's writing. The irony he was employing was largely missed or brushed away. The upper-class spectators thus failed to catch the significance of what Brecht was saying about their life space through the activities of thieves, prostitutes, beggars, pickpockets, and others of low station. This lack of perception of Brecht's ideas and irony was not entirely the fault of the spectators.[45] The environment of the opera was so drastically different from their own standard of living that application was minimal until character motivations and morality were considered. Then the similarities became more apparent.[46]

If The Threepenny Opera was of more universal scope and application, The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny was more localized. The meanings of the lessons were similar--"wake up," "think," "don't let this happen again"--but the powers at work in the story moved deductively from the whole "civilization" of Mahagonny and became focused on the one character, Paul Ackermann, who withstood the laws of the new society.

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[45]Ewen, p. 175.

[46]Weideli, pp. 26-27.

Using techniques which foreshadowed that of the absurdist playwrights in the 1950's Brecht showed three fugitives from the law establishing a city of instant pleasure, refuge, and indulgence. Expensive happiness was to be based on estrangement and social irresponsibility. The spectators who saw performances of The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny were subjected to admonitions and instructions concerning the ways in which they could cope with and hope to survive the pressures of their own life space outside the theatre. The struggle of the Nazi right with the Marxist left in Germany brought only confrontation and conflict.

The city of Mahagonny symbolized the disordered existence which could be corrected only by a Marxist revolution. Indulgence in selfish and vain pursuits negated all the positive qualities desired for any civilization. The ultimate destruction of society, Brecht showed, would be caused by man placing his trust in his fellowman. As the climate of Mahagonny degenerated into misfortune and disenchantment, the struggling inhabitants attempted to survive by drunkenly clambering over each other. When money was no longer available for the purchase of liquor, and reality had to be faced, the world turned against the impoverished and decreed death for their irresponsibility.

Such crass materialism was blatant throughout Germany, and rarely had the social structure of Germany received such harsh treatment in a play. Even though it contained

references to American locales and American names were used for most of the characters, the unmistakable truth was that Mahagonny was actually Germany. When the play was first presented in Berlin in 1931, the political situation in Germany had progressed to the point that the anarchy which was depicted on the stage was an exact replica of conditions which existed in the world outside.

A year later, The Mother was used by Brecht to show his German spectators several ways--leaflet distribution, one-on-one instruction sessions, political group involvement--by which they could resist the mounting Nazi control of their life space. Alleging such conditions as fire hazard and overcrowding, the German police closed the play. This dramatic and unexpected action intensified the audience's perception of the main points in the script.

The reactions of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat to these ideas differed greatly. The bourgeoisie at times experienced difficulty following the meaning of the story, were often bored by the whole presentation, and often sat grinning benignly as they witnessed and comprehended only the external features of the play. The proletariat, on the other hand, immediately comprehended the political implications described in the story. Recognizing their own life space in the adventures of Pelagea Vlassova and her son as they resisted the control of the authorities, the German working classes discovered the glories which could be theirs if they

followed the paths of active protest and revolutionary warfare.

The major plays written while Brecht was in exile--Mother Courage and Her Children, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Good Woman of Setzuan, and Galileo--offered unusual life spaces to the audiences. Each of these plays was premiered in a country other than the one in which it was written. Three of them--The Caucasian Chalk Circle was the exception--were first seen in Zurich, Switzerland, while The Caucasian Chalk Circle was performed first at Northfield, Minnesota. Thus, they were addressed more to the conditions of the world than to any one geographical area. Nevertheless, each of them portrays an historical environment in which unusual challenges were presented to the individuals who lived there.

With Mother Courage and Her Children, Brecht's attack against military intrusion into the life space of the populace became extremely bitter. The irony of the situation for Germans was contained in the fact that war produced profits for some select few, while devastating the heart of the nation. In the end all were losers in the business of war--small personal losers, as well as larger national losers. While the flames of war were growing to consume Europe, Brecht tried, through Mother Courage and Her Children, to illustrate how stupidity and blindness could thus destroy an otherwise successful life space.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle reversed a previously dramatized view--in The Good Woman of Setzuan, for example--of the violent nature of his country's life space. The morality of ownership, condoned by the law, came from proper utilization. Correct usage of people or territory was the highest form of "love" to which man could aspire. Brecht the Marxist gave way to Brecht the artist as he dealt with problems of life space in a strangely "Christian" manner.

The inherent goodness in man could affect his life space positively only at extraordinary cost. In The Good Woman of Setzuan, friends, relatives, and personal possessions had to be sacrificed. Before the play ended, the spectators discovered society's exploitative nature and came to see that goodness bred cruelty and ruthlessness. First produced as World War II was about to begin, this play showed how "good people" such as Shen Te were being trampled by the Nazis. What was often considered the hope of the world was consumed by Shen Te's alter ego, Shui Ta. A play set in China nevertheless showed a life space remarkably like that outside the theatre in Germany. In order to survive the coming horrors of war, the German populace had to adopt many of the ruthless, cruel tactics of the Third Reich.

At a time when individual freedoms were threatened in Germany, between 1937 and 1939, Brecht first drafted his text for Galileo. The German people were dominated by the Third Reich, and were expected to remain silent and submissive to

the higher powers. To withstand or contradict the control of the Nazi leadership brought persecution and death. Galileo's dilemma at being forced to make statements which he knew were not scientifically supportable, and therefore against his will and the laws of God, was comparable to that of the German people who were coerced into professing allegiance to the Nazi hierarchy in which they did not believe and which inspired great fear. The change of relationship between Galileo and Barberini, when Barberini became Pope, dramatized the challenge faced by those Germans whose friends had become members of the Nazi party. The isolation and intimidation in such relationships became a major problem for those who withstood the Nazi controls. Galileo's resolve to continue his research, and his successful smuggling of his manuscripts, showed a way to remove the shadows of prejudice and ignorance which darkened the life space of Germany.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This study explored the relationship between the dramatic and the educational theories developed by Bertolt Brecht, and selected twentieth-century theories of pedagogy. A survey of Brecht's life and career revealed a consistent pattern of rebellion and innovation as he tried to alter opinions, implant ideologies, and establish new concepts and modes of theatrical production. In Chapters II-IV, several theories of learning were compared with the principles of didacticism evident in Brecht's work. As a result, the stimulus-response theories of the associationists were seen to be inappropriate to Brecht's concepts, but the three principal aspects of Gestaltism--perception, insight, and life space, as formulated by Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, Wolfgang Kohler, and Kurt Lewin--seemed profoundly related to Brecht's concern with man's ability to perceive and to learn about his environment.

Like theatre artists from the time of the Greeks to the twentieth century, Brecht felt he could offer new ideas and solutions for society's problems. Thus, his life was devoted not only to caring for his own family, but to devising

persuasive verbal and visual images to be presented on the stage before an audience.

This study investigated the characteristics of the work of the Gestaltists as they seemed to have been responsible for the instructional capacity of Brecht's plays. Recognizing the potent lessons to be learned from the past, Brecht strove to create perceptual images of historical environments. The characters, who represented various ideologies and philosophies in situations which stimulated insightful learning, struggled with life spaces that accurately resembled life outside the theatre. In this chapter, the investigation of Brecht's life and times, dramatic art, and use of Gestaltist learning theory will be summarized. Then the apparent relationship between Brecht's work and twentieth-century theories of pedagogy will be described. Finally, several areas requiring further research will be discussed.

Summary

During Brecht's lifetime, Germany went through a period of national expansion, of revolution, and of destruction. Brecht's adherence to Marxism and Socialism and his opposition to Nazism led him to a life of rebellion and cynicism as he fought the loss of intellectual and artistic freedom. His school years in Augsburg and Munich, for example, led to a reputation as the central figure among the young dissidents. While studying medicine as a medical orderly in a military

hospital during World War I, Brecht's anti-war sentiments became dominant in his thinking. On his return to Munich, he experienced his first contact with both drama and Expressionism, particularly the work of Georg Buchner, and began reading extensively in the writings of Expressionistic poets and playwrights. Soon dissatisfied with their ignoring of the world outside the theatre, though he shared ideas on language and dramatic structure with Frank Wedekind, a leading Expressionist, Brecht disapproved of Expressionism as a movement.

With these new techniques in mind, and haunted by man's inhumanity to man and the necessity to struggle to survive, Brecht began his career as a dramatist with Baal, a nihilistic piece filled with shocking theatrical devices, brutality, and destruction. Baal was followed by Drums in the Night, which received the Kleist Prize in 1922, and In the Jungle of the Cities, one of Brecht's most powerful nihilistic dramas.

After Hitler's beer-hall putsch in 1923, Brecht moved to Berlin where he immediately became involved with the practitioners at the Deutsches Theater: Max Reinhardt, Leopold Jessner, and Erwin Piscator. In early 1926, Brecht began to study Marxism, which became a dominant influence in his writings. At this time, also, he met Kurt Weill, a young composer of Neue Musik, a musical revolution against the work of Richard Wagner, Gustav Mahler, and Richard Strauss. Weill composed the scores for several Brecht plays, most notably

The Threepenny Opera (1928) and The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny (1930). During this time Brecht was developing his theories of alienation and epic theatre.

In 1928, after divorcing his first wife of five years, Brecht married Helene Weigel, an actress of moderate fame who became the premiere performer of many of Brecht's female characters, and by 1932, the political conditions in Germany had become explosive, with high unemployment, suspicious elections, and a three-way fight by the Nazis, the Communists, and the Social Democrats for control of the nation. Brecht's last major work before Hitler began controlling Germany was The Mother (1932), a didactic drama set in Russia. As the economic and political conditions intensified, the theatrical managers, playwrights, and other production personnel began to receive pressure from the political right because of the threats felt by the ruling Nazi party.

Between 1933 and 1949, while Brecht was exiled from Germany, he wrote his most notable plays: Mother Courage and Her Children, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Good Woman of Setzuan, and Galileo. After his return to Germany in 1949, Brecht dedicated himself to the rebuilding of the theatre in Germany. The result was the Berliner Ensemble, Brecht's own repertory company. In the spring of 1956, Brecht developed a heart condition. His health declined rapidly, and he died in August, 1956.

Brecht's Use of Learning Theory

Opposed to the romantic and illusionist theatre of the late nineteenth century, Bertolt Brecht and Erwin Piscator began epic theatre, which incorporated an episodic structure unified by a central theme or idea taken from Expressionism with the social, political, and economic conflicts prevalent in 1920's and 1930's. The theatre of Brecht and Piscator was to be a means of teaching and controlling its audiences.

While Piscator focused on contemporary subjects, Brecht used history. Piscator sought to arouse feelings and emotional responses; Brecht, to facilitate the thinking of the audiences by trying to "alienate" them from the emotional influences in the plays.

The result was a series of vignettes which stressed a central idea and which employed the verfremdungseffect, an alienation or estrangement from the plays. The audience was to remain objective as it viewed the scenes, permitting them to reason about, understand, and solve problems. Foreign locales; prologues and epilogues; "misuc," an unpredictable, basically forgettable dissonance of musical sounds and songs which often grated against the lyrics and disputed the intent of the dramatic scene; "gestic" music, which accompanied the reflective and instructional ballads, creating devices of social moralizing and attitudinal expression which interrupted the dramatic tension of a scene; a "bold use of

hackneyed words in unhackneyed contexts"[1]--these techniques helped Brecht teach by means of epic theatre. He also directed each production without a definite time schedule or plan, but with a freedom and uniqueness based on each play's need to achieve the proper degree of alienation. Throughout the laborious schedule--which could last up to eighteen months--Brecht conducted his rehearsals in a relaxed and casual manner, with many revisions of the scripts and numerous experiments with blocking the patterns of movement and the line readings. The actors, who were narrators of the events in the life of a person, not impersonators of the characters they were portraying, intellectually objectified their movements, vocal patterns, and facial expressions.

Technical effects and devices remained completely obvious, never attempting to create the illusion of reality, and scenery served merely as a background or perhaps a comment on the action. Sparsely-arranged furniture and scenic structures, and projections showing the title of the play, a caption to a scene, or a thematic slogan were all that was necessary.

Yet every aspect of the production was carefully orchestrated and rehearsed. Brecht strove to stage his productions with an active application of alienation effects which would cause his spectators to learn how to change their social

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[1]Martin Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work (New York, 1971), p. 110.

milieu. Apparently using techniques similar to the principles of Gestaltism, he dramatized stories from the historical past which showed characters in search of solutions to social, political, and economic problems. What Brecht achieved was a version of Wertheimer's "phi phenomenon" in the structuring of the images and dramatic effects for the purpose of creating a system, or Gestalt, of conditions and situations into a pattern or form of wholeness. Like Wertheimer, Brecht wanted the understanding or perception of whole gestalten to be the primary goal of his performances. This perceptual experience would then be developed into a focal point of understanding, or insight. In arriving at this insightful condition, the viewer established new relationships between himself and his environment, leading him ultimately to make corrections in the conditions.

Koffka's emphasis on experience as a controller of perception and a prerequisite for learning appeared as Brecht's dependence on the past as a resource or a reference for change. Memory traces, developed from previous experiences, would be adjusted and altered by the learner's continuous exposure to the "better gestalt" of the play.

To facilitate this Gestalt, the environment of a drama had to be established in a past period of history which accurately depicted the social influences affecting the characters' lives. These influences dramatized man's lack of "permanence" in life, a quality which Brecht stressed was

necessary for more effective teaching. Geographic distance kept the audience clearly separate from the characters on the stage, observing them and evaluating their words and actions from an objective viewpoint.

Recognizing also that man's perceptions stemmed from his life and social class, Brecht required his audiences to fill in the many spaces he left in the construction of his plays and characters. Since power of suggestion was a dominant consideration throughout his writings, Brecht arranged the short scenes of his plays in sequences that were often disjointed and always episodic. In settings which lacked details, his sketchily-drawn characters strode through their scenes with an objectivity which blocked emotional involvements with the audiences.

The objectivity inherent in this perception was further stimulated by an incongruous structuring of action, dialogue, lyrics, and music. Songs and musical numbers which offered no comfortable or predictable harmonies and rhythms frequently accompanied the dialogue of the scenes. The dissonance of the music mirrored the dissonance of the characters' lives onstage.

Perception through alienation was further helped by the insertion of unexpected and sometimes contradictory devices or effects such as projections of photographic images or captions and banners or signs with slogans and admonitions.

In each of his plays, moreover, Brecht emphasized the wholeness of the field (the society) in which the figures (the characters) found themselves in dynamic parts. Living within these social environments, and seeking to determine the courses of their lives, Brecht's characters etched perceptual images which were constantly changing, creating new field-figure relationships, thinking, and learning.

Kohler's interest in insight, or a reorganization of experience, Brecht saw as what the spectators did when applying the conditions and situations depicted in his plays to their daily lives.

Led through a series of scenes which were carefully engineered to bring them eventually to experience a positive revision in opinion, to develop a more effective restructuring or purpose, to establish an improved arrangement of personal relationships, or to determine a progressive solution to their problems, the spectators retained their experiences in the theatre when they returned to their real-life circumstancess. They would then, perhaps, reorganize their lives. Brecht wanted his spectators to perceive their own conditions in the settings of the plays, recognize the possible alternatives for improving those conditions, and determine the most effective means for solving their problems.

Lewin's theory of life space, derived from mathematics and physics, would explain Brecht's emphasis on the

everchanging nature of the realm of existence, or topology, in a play. The life space portrayed in The Threepenny Opera, for example, was characterized by the combination of middle-class morals with lower-class life styles. The similarities between the scenes on the stage and Germany's social structure in the 1920's were easily grasped. Yet the life space in The Threepenny Opera was far more universal in scope than that in The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny. Though located in America, Mahagonny, the city of instant pleasure, refuge, and death, became a symbol of the life space of Berlin, where the pressures of life led to attempts to escape through expensive flights of fantasy and social irresponsibility. As long as one's money held out, the society maintained a facade of security and success; life was livable. But the fragile life suffered greatly when the money was gone. The anarchical conditions of Berlin in 1931 were starkly similar to the life space onstage in the city of Mahagonny.

Another example of this relationship with Germany occurred in The Mother. Though located in Russia, the life space was recognized by the proletariat as Germany, where they suffered hardship and persecution under Nazi control. Only through protests and other revolutionary activities could their life space be changed. The Chinese life spaces in The Caucasian Chalk Circle and The Good Woman of Setzuan were described as unusually "Christian," even though the

life spaces in China were like that in Germany where violence and subversion were the rules. Finally, though the life space in Galileo was ostensibly Italy, it bore a striking resemblance to that of Germany.

Thus, Brecht utilized elements of the theories of perception, insight, and life space in his dramas as he strove to force his audiences to perceive the characters' environments, to grasp the significance and relationships between the characters' environments and their own social milieu, and to recognize those influences in one's life space which attract or repel the individual.

A Final Word: Suggestions for Further Study

Not in Germany nor anywhere else today does Bertolt Brecht write his plays that seek to teach and persuade. Though the Berliner Ensemble still produces works of art, no longer can Bertolt Brecht coach the actors and the musicians in the intricacies of verfremdungseffect. The audiences that Brecht sought to teach through Gestaltist theories of perception, insight, and life space are mostly long dead. They did not learn from Brecht's plays, and their society was destroyed. If this fact is proof that Brecht's plays did not work as tools of learning, does the result also negate the theories? There is no way to answer such a question, of course. One can only note that none of the other learning theories or methods during Brecht's lifetime managed to teach

the populace of the twentieth century very much about avoiding war, violence, starvation, and the thousand other ills "that flesh is heir to." Some of the responsibility for learning must rest with the student.

The body of work that Brecht left, however, would be amenable to empirical study. It might be possible to demonstrate once and for all that the Gestaltist theories are manifest in Brecht's plays and that they work about as well as any learning theories. Such a demonstration probably would require the unthinkable: a director skilled in his art, who was also knowledgeable and practiced in the Gestaltist pedagogy, who would stage the plays under controlled conditions, and who would go through the thousands of hours of audience-testing that such an experiment would require.

This empirical project remains to be done if Brecht's use of Gestaltist learning theories is to serve as a canon for the classroom teacher or the writer-director bent on teaching and persuasion. Another field of research would include a search of other playwrights for their uses of this or that learning theory. A thesis playwright like Odets or Miller comes easily to mind, but one of the more Brechtian of contemporary playwrights--Peter Weiss, for example--would serve just as well.

Be that as it may, Brecht was a poet and a playwright who desired to teach and persuade with his plays. Whether he succeeded in that way, his plays are acknowledged to be works

of art that transcend the social, political, and economic ills of his or of any other age. What he produced was a dramaturgy in which the didactic became the poetic. The highest tribute to Bertolt Brecht is the widespread use of the adjective "Brechtian" to denote anyone who attempts to stimulate an audience by means of highly treatrical but incongruous structuring of the dramatic elements.

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