



The Voice Of Protest in Brecht's Mother Courage and Her Children

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Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) is a prominent German writer who devotes his pen to reform human life. He believes in man power to change, build, and reform life. He addresses in all his plays this latent capacity to revolt against any force that tries to turn the human soul into savages. He is certain that the authentic enemies of human are " war and capitalism, thus he keeps warning his people of tasting the bitterness of another world war"(Lall 5). He does not want to tell half- truth in his political plays that are injected with appalling truth about the authentic grounds behind human violence. His pen is enriched with hatred against any war. He makes full benefit of his personal experiences in witnessing violence. Unfortunately his life witnesses the out breaking of the two world wars, then he is forced to forced under political grounds to endure three exiles from 1933 to 1948. From the womb of exile ,many masterpieces watches the light. The actual throes of his exile adds great persuasion to his words, thus:

Brecht abandoned both the rigid didacticism and the anarchical Romantic characters of his youth is favor of universal man Presented in his pathetic struggle against all forces that crush



Him and deprive him of a full human existence. These enemies include war and poverty, political irresponsibility and arbitrary decision(Mack 1257).

Brecht writes with virginal views regarding human corruption that shocks his audience. He reveals the wickedness of the capitalists who trades in the human blood to increase their fortune by selling weapons. Even the capitalist and tycoon are losers in the fire of war because when flames begin ,it does not distinguish between human. Thus, there is no profiteer from war that is a bad teacher. Brecht is exiled because of his political views that scandalize the head of his country and his political views are used against him to be " as a reason for rejecting his artistic achievement and as a stick with to beat him and expose the apparent hypocrisy in his personal behavior"(Eddershaw 2). The responsible leaders threw their citizen in the fire of war for political pride. By evoking war, they change the human nature who is fond of peaceful life. He believes in the goodness of man, thus he directs his effort to attack war. His personal circumstance of exile and the participation in the struggle against Hitler make him involved in conflict. This voice of tormented wants to open the closed eyes to adopt their role in stopping the horrible creeping of war that cannot distinguishes between innocent and evil. Brecht cannot endure watching people live in the traumatic experience. In spite of the pressure on his pen that sometimes "they try to put very definite stop to the devolvement of such theatre"(Worthon 771). He escapes with his talent to continue his attack against war and evokers. His peaceful views find a universal echoes in the mind because he touches a painful spot in our world. He learns the truth of the



bitterness of war so he does his utmost effort to convey his messages clearly . He does not seek for the audience sympathy toward the victim of war in his plays, but he wants actions so as to change the society . He tries in his plays to gather voices against war and he refuses any pretext to adopt neutral side .So there is no silence in his campaigns. He puts a heavy-weighted hope on the human will to drop the masks from the political faces and say their words of protest against any bloody war that spoils man and nature. Brecht also aims to drop any false attitudes that beatify war like religious war or civilized war.

Brecht realizes early that the principal role of writing is not for entertainment, but there is authentic task that is superior to any trivial purpose. Brecht applies this in his plays that are used as a means of education and waking the mind to the agenda of wars. Thus, Brecht indulges in old legend and modern themes so as to add more persuasion for his views. He deserts even romantic isolation that some writers impose on their pens, for him the real writer is the accurate reflector of his people`s suffer. He questions the role of mere entertainment in theater to such extent that raises many enquiries regarding this point saying:

How can the theater be both instructive and entertaining?... how can be free, ignorant man of our country, with his thirst for freedom and his hunger for knowledge . how can the tortured and the heroic, abused and ingenious man of this great and ghastly country obtain



his own theater which will help him to master the world and himself.(Fischer Light 314)

He wants to show the entire universe that" all wars, small or big are tragic by their own nature... nothing can be merciless than the killing and the large –scale slaughter which take part in the course of a war"(Brecht 125) . The ultimate aim of his ambition is to gather the minds to put an end to all wars. He applies this on himself when he protests against the war in his country during his youth and he announces his pacifist views in spite of the political danger. During one of his protest he is subjected to imprisonment that is stopped by the intercession of his teacher. His abhorrence to war is increased when he joins army. As a medical student. The horror that he witnesses leaves its painful print on his sensitive soul as " a reaction to the tender mind shaken to its core by sheer horror of existence in a world where such suffering way allowed to happen"(Corrigan 94). Brecht is staunch devoted to his noble mission. Many works contain warnings from the violence of war, for instance he writes **The primer of war**(1955)that covers the crises of the war of Spain in the second world, **Two Sons**(1948)that tells story from the second war ,**Drums in the Night**(1918)depicts the return of a soldier from war to find his woman pregnant from profiteer of war. This research sheds light on **Mother Courage and Her Children** all these plays present alive proofs of the accuracy of the law of war that brings death, loss, hunger, pain and rape. This views makes him a realist and loyal to his objectives facts" because he has abandoned the fourth wall theory of presentation... tended to make a dream world of reality, Brecht is able to be more ,not less ,of a realist"(Lall 244)



He as many postmodernist denies" the audiences` passive emotional identification with central character of conventional realist or expressionist drama"(Esslin 7). He does not want to beatify the real corruption in his work, but he wants to denounce or at least unfold it. This is the key difference between Brecht`s theatre and socialist theatre. This can explain the disgust and agitation in his plays in comparison with the comfort in the socialist- realist`s that is mere "propaganda embellishes reality"(Bentley 217). He shoulders the theatre new responsibility to organize even entertainment to gain instruction and to "increase the powers of entertainment and experiment which were to increase its power of instruction"(Birringer 148).

In Mother Courage and Her Children, war appears as a business. He wants readers to see alive evidences about the depression of war via following the steps of the mother in this play and "the actual bonds connecting politics and the economy "(Whiteworth 114). She adopts the views of many countries toward war as the best place for the growth their trade. This play carries a painful warning to all who trade with the blood. This view is a shocking dig at the capitalism who sometime provokes the human conflict on purpose to gain petty political benefits of trivial share in war spoil. Mother Courage does not drag her canteen, but also the audience is dragged gradually to the first fired lines of fighting to be eye- witness of the human blight . Brecht intends to follow the footstep of this mother who is armed with shrewdness to gauge her profit from war. Brecht on purpose drops any frailty from her personality to make her alive proof of the disaster of the profiteer. Mother Courage vows that she will save her children and gather money



only. Brecht wants to prove that:

The impossibility of sustaining this dual role. One after another Courage loses her children to the war which is also the source of her livelihood ... mother courage presents the audience with an opportunity to learn a lesson that its protagonist never learn. A lesson summed ... at the end of the first scene of this play ' when war gives you all you earn ,one day it claim something in return'.(Cousin 97).

The mother from the outset deadens her patriotism when she decides not to support any flag save the banner of personal profit . this is part of her scheme to protect the lives of her sons. She continues in her changing colour to be like camelon amid conflicting powers. Via tracing this mother one can reveal the hope of Brecht in the individual ability to alter the courted social system that he blames for corruption of man. These views are spread and :

Pervade all Brecht's works as he presents him, man wants to be good Man finds it difficult to be bad but confronted by corruption and greed ,deprivation and suffering, he uses in sheer self-



defense the weapons of his oppressors and sometimes strife's

his natural feeling of pity.(Mack 1257)

Brecht noble aim is to rebuild man because he thinks "there is no chance of maintain positive structure without you"(Abboston 132) and his plays are intended to change the audience`s ideas about how society should be run and he wants " the spectator must change the world through dialectic process of mediation which he actively carries out between reality and process on the stage and vice versa"(Fisher 324). To him the petty single voices can be organized to be powerful in the revolutionary outburst that may crash or remove the capitalist from the seizure of power. For this ground Brecht thinks that the mother reaches the peak of wickedness when she tries to weaken the revolution in the captain spirit. In her behavior ,she represents the general voices of submission. She practices a foxy role in sapping his anger and breaking his will that according to her will bring nothing ,but loss and cures . Eventually she succeeds in extinguishing the flame of his defiance when she persuades him leave his award to his treacherous leader who wastes the soldier`s rewards on alcohols and whoring passively. The killing of revolution or the participation in stultifying the voice of protest is the jeopardous state that Brecht sheds more illumination on it . He assails any hand that tries to mute the voice of protestation to create earthy hell. He refers the social law that benefits from this appalling silence. This event clarifies the dumbness of the articulated world in front the pain of war. The mother confronts the young soldier with appalling question mark that is enough to deaden his impending upheaval. She discusses the



matter diplomatically, just many persuasive false voices of war, to divert his action into surrender . she tells the soldier:

You`re right, but how long? How long you not standing for
unfairness? One hour, two? Do not ask yourself that, did you, but
it`s the whole point, and why, once you`re in irons. It`s too bad
if you suddenly finds you can put unfairness after all...and
sitting and don`t mix. Don` try to stand up you won`t stand the
way you was standing before I shouldn't worry about what I think
I'm no better, not one moment.. bought up all our fighting
spirit, they have eh?(Brecht 45)

Inspite of the mother`s power in killing the voice of protest ,she will fail in front of her daughter`s iron will. Kattrin draws a wonderful picture of protest in spite of her loss of the simple weapon of protest which is the voice since she is a dumb. It is a grave irony to have the first authentic protester is dumb .This plays witnesses the birth of articulated voice of rebellion ,Kattrin. Her first stage of protest emerges in the form of crestfallen faint cries against the long war that postpones her dream in marriage and motherhood. She ,unlike her mother, fails to cope with the harshness of the conflicting world. This world recons various tragedies into her life . firstly her dumbness which is caused by war, secondly her lost youth that is spent in wondering under the guns to prolong her suffer.



Finally her last scare above her eye bow which lessen her marriage opportunity. The shocking surprised that in spite of all these trauma ,she is injected with sympathy for human in particularly the innocent. By having this purity ,she save the remain of human inside her soul and this is the gem of her grandeur . Her protest seems to equate her power of protest . her defiance appears clearly when she stands against her mother who refuses to give the injured peasants some shirts to bandage their cuts. She forces her mother to listen to her demand under the threat. Her mother tries to calm her saying:

I can't give now what with expenses, taxes, loan interest and bribes- making guilral, noises, Kattrin raises a plank and threatens her mother with it. You gone plain crazy? Put that plank away or I'll paste you on, you cow- I'm giving now, I don't wait to got to think of myself.(Brecht 49)

By doing so Kattrin surpasses the first stage of protest successfully. In spite of her mother selfishness and egoism, she extracts her right to say 'no' to capitalist mother. Brecht invites his audience to pause and meditate in Kattrin action. He wants other to adopt her steadfastness. The blindness of the mother reaches the climax when she overlooks the physical and emotional demands, just like the neglect of the social system. Kattrin spiritual explosion reaches its crest, but as usual her mother ,like any system, saps her energy with false promises.



The mother lacks any pathos even to her only daughter. The mother promises her great compensation after war. She convinces her that business is useful to gather her dowry to be a wife. Kattrin ,like many poor people, waits the prizes of peace to satisfy her motherhood instinct. The mother proves to be so greedy to such extent to gain profit at the cost of her daughter`s legitimates needs. When the cook makes his proposal to marry the mother, he refuses to allow Kattrin to live with them. When he tries to enumerate the reasons , he indirectly making a rapid survey of the disasters of war. Kattrin overhears her assumed defects which she has no hand in creating them. The few words of the cooks are great in the world of pain . He says that her agedness, dumbness and her ugly distortion will hinder his business . The cruel part of this conversation is kattrin`s overhearing , she hears the rejection of her entire world for her identity. In spite of her heavy burden, Kattrin has much to do. The cook tells the mother:

use your imagination. I`m got no room. It aint one of sort go three bar parlors put our backs in it . we two`ll get aliving, but not three, no chance of that. She can keep cart... find a husband how? Dumb and that scar on the top of it. And at her age? ...no getting over fact. And that`s another reason, I can`t have her in the inn. Customers, don`t want to be looking at that all the time can`t blame them.(Brecht 74)



Brecht reveals the nobility of Kattrin`s soul when the sergeant tries to cheat the mother by haggling over the belt. He wants to grant another officer an opportunity to recruit Elif, Kattrin`s brother. The war is pictured just like the hell that is not satisfied with the thrown body to ask for more. The officers steal soldiers by force or temptation. The voice of protest of Kattrin appears via her painful cries while the mother, like many leaders, ignores the silent tragic screams and to give more attention to her bargain with the officer. Kattrin tries with her humble ability to offer protection for her honest brother, Swiss Chees who tries to hide cashbox. When she finds two soldiers follow him, she tries to warn him with her faint voice. She strives in vain to warn her brothers in a world that seems to be ignorant to any faint voices. Her voice is in need to be strengthen in a world that cares only for hard voices of protest.

It is worthy to analyze the single true voice of protest in this play. The dumbness of this voice is so suggestive since it may refer to the frailty of true protest in the reality and it reflects the disastrous blight of human life whose voices are muted by foxy leaders. The dumbness may be injected on purpose by the playwright to convey a message to all the silent to say their word. Via Kattrin, he is wants to say there is no excuse to be passive. Man can find different ways to say his no. the obstacle of Kattrin does not weaken her capacity of protest since she tries to find compensation through gesture and faint cries. Brecht does not free Kattrin from the responsibility if she selects to be passive protester in spite of her physical obstacle. The difficulties of Kattrin`s protest invite protesters to invent new way of protest to create harder voice to be heard by the deaf world. Brecht supports any element that may add new



strength to the human power. Any voice should be encouraged regardless of its waning power. Perhaps Brecht on propose cripples his heroine and hinders her expression of protest. to drop any excuse of being neutral. If this is the state with the crippled person, how is the blame with the healthy coward persons. Kattrin is naked by Brecht from her power to resort to moan gesture to protect the innocent. She stands for true human nature that is not distorted by material stain . Everyone has this power that is hidden under material cover .Even the mother, who used to kill any young voice of protest, confesses that during her youth she owns the flame of revolution ,but the difficult world extinguishes it .Brecht wants to convey certain message regarding killing the human response is encouraging the evil to seize the power, he wishes us to:

recognize that when the good are so easily destroyed in the manner we have come to accommodate evil within the social system, and the humanitarian response should be seek better justice in the world and make crucial change.(Abbotson 133)

Kattrin has a great hope the coming peace to collect the remaining of her destroyed spirit. She the poor girl ran away when she learns that war will continue as if she wanted to desert this reality. The material voice of her mother that plays the same role of the capitalists in different places and time tries to deceive her by telling her " war`ll go on a bit longer and we`ll make a bit more money and peacetime be all the nicer for it"(Brecht 34). The horrible of this the equation of war is realized by Kattrin . The continuation of war means her painful prolongation of her



suffer. Her simple solution is resorting to night dream. Even her cruel mother listens to her groans and begins to comprehend her daughter`s difficult situation:

how she to pull the cart on her own? War scares her. She `ll never stand it. The dreams she must have... I have her nights groaning. Mostly after a battle what`s she seeing those dreams

I'd like to know she`s got a soft heart. Lately I found she'd got a another hedgehog lucked away what we`d run over .(Brecht 74)

People should support kattrin in her strive against war since she will wreck in a moment what the enemy plans in a year. Kattrin inherits the heroism of her mother before her surrender. Kattrin is ready to put an end to the war injustice in small part of the world depending on her limited ability. In spite of her simple role , Brecht wants to magnify this noble power and to add superhuman strength . He also wants to generalize her experience in protest to gain lessons from her strive. Courage achieves her economic dreams of gathering money ,but war brings no honest dreams. Courage should present her sacrifices to war. She loses her two sons and a daughter at the altar of economic war that "hurt her every possible way, but she cannot live without it, she is happy when it begins again amid she is miserable when it continues"(Bial 51). Kattrin with her scare above her eyebrow turns to be alive proof of the destruction of war . So through protester and the supporters should pay the tax of war which diverts the legitimate demand with forbidden one.



Courage allows her daughter to wear Yvette's` boot , which is a symbol of sexual frustration, to compensate Katrin sexual needs. Even Yvette turns into prostitute instead of a wife. Brecht via the suffer of women during war states that there is satisfactory compensation for any wasted needs.

Katrin is certain that there is no room for her dreams amid this violence. She refuses the boot that she previously wished. She chooses to be pure as if she foretells her coming mission is nobler than this triviality. It is important to quote her words ,but unfortunately it is impossible. So her actions should be register be this is the important part of her revolution. Brecht open new stage of her protest since language appears to be useless in front actions. Her acceptance to shoulder this responsibility is to show the entire world of the power of action and the purposelessness of words in this situation. She is a woman of action. Her portrait is reflected in the eyes of her survivals and her victimizers. Katrin has a new realization of truth to such extent she cannot be deceived by her mother . For her " it is enough to understand the world ,it is necessary to change it"(Kershaw 18). Her mother begins to sympathize with her ,but her sympathy is ephemeral due to her material ambition. She complains:

What I call historic moment is that dashing my daughter over the eye- she`shalf wrecked already, won`t get no husband now, and her crasy about kids any road. She`s only few month she was little.(Brecht 59)



War destroys everything save certain noble part in Katrin's heart that is ready to heal the bloody cuts of war. In the middle of the destruction, Katrin's maternal instinct arouses when she realizes that even the little babies are not far from the catch of the fire of war. Katrin begins in this stage to take action. She dashes to the burnt house to rescue the little baby and she sings lullaby to calm him. She offers this rescue when she is in dire need to be saved from the horrible fire of war. Her maternal instinct is too solid to be solved by the fire of war. Her mother watches her defiance and tries to suck her fighting power. Brecht provides painful images of war to disturb his audience so as to join Katrin's campaign and this is an effective way to "disturb an audience emotionally by finding ways to make what he called the 'agro-effect' more complete" (Sanders 622). War has the power to divert even the noble feeling of motherhood. This is clear in Courage who has faint voice of dying mother inside her. She tries to advise her daughter not to imitate Yvette's sexy walk. The mother confesses to Katrin that in war there is no legal vent for her sexual desire. Courage's attitudes are expressive because it carries an a confession of the effect of war that war reverses the human needs and collapses human nature. She chains her with double demands so she should not leave the fight and warn her not to commit any disgrace. She tells Katrin to take lessons from Yvette, regimental prostitute who sells her body and gains only disease and early agedness. she tells her:

Let that be a lesson Katrin. Don't you start anything with soldiers. Love makes the world go round, I am warning you. even with follows not in the arm it's no bed to roses. he says



he`d like to kiss the ground your feet walk on...and after that
you`re his skirry . be thankful you are dumb ,then you can`t
contradict yourself and won`t be wanting to bite your tongue off
for speaking the truth, it`s a god-send being dumb.(Brecht 24)

Katrin reaches her thirty , thus her hope to create her dreams
outside the boundaries of war is little. Now she is armed with hatred to
any war that usurps her white dream. The climax of her protest is
occurred when she is invited by the peasants to pray for the protection of
their sleeping village from pending jeopardy. The enemy plans to attack
the village at night . katrin imagines the tragic fate of the villagers and
she sympathize with them. She listens to their prayers and imploring to
save their friends inside the village. Katrin`s tongue says nothing, but
her heart says much for the poor sake . she learns that among the victims
will be children her soul is etherizes to the climax of nobility and self-
denial. She can endure no more . she decides to crown her protest with a
great cry against the bloody hands. Her cry will be beyond of control of
material capture . in spite of being dumb ,she wants her voice to exceed
the human limitation to reach every corner of this cruel world. The
peasants tell her:

Pray pray creature! Now we can do to stop bloodshed. You can`t
talk, may be at least can pray. He`ll hear you if no one else can, I
`ll help you... Father which art in heaven ,hear. Thou over prayer,
let not the town be destroyed with what`s in it sound asleep and
suspecting nowt . arouse, thou them the enemy approach them with
pikes and guns inin the blackness across the fields below the
slope.(Brecht 83)



Fortunately she speaks for the first time via her drum . She climbs up the roof and begins to hit the drum with all her power so as to wake not only the sleeping village, but the entire passive world that stands motionless in front of war crimes. Her sacrifice achieves its aim in alerting the village. She seems to raise appalling question mark who can wake the whole world? She defies the army alone and she changes the balance of power. Brecht forces his audience to follow the stages of Kattrin`s revolution to gain full understanding and persuasion of the social dilemma so he refers to " complex seeing as objective to bring audience to see and therefore to understand the nature of social reality" (Goodman 86) .She does not satisfied with only prayers, but her real success in defending the village. She takes active decisions . the peasants do not learn about her limitless power.

Kattrin is able to put an end to the pain of thousands of people . kattrin with her humble power is able to save the village from impending death. The officer tries to stop her protest by threading her more than once to stop her dumb . The threat touches the source of her living ,the wagon. The officer tries to destroy the wagon . She refuses any threat or false promises that sap the energy of her protest . Now she is in dire need to be deaf to all the requests of surrender the officer shots her to make her death as a white spot in the map of victory in a world that fails to embrace such a white hope . She represents the truth that appears amid the lies of this world ,but " truth is forced to fly like a sacred white doe in the woodland "(Perkins 75) . The enemy succeeds in killing her voice as million people who are killed by their countries to gain their silence. In spite of her death , her dumb still brings voices of protest. The enemy can kill the bodies ,but they can destroy the truth that



she presents via her sacrifice. Her voice is important and it needs accurate study to take lessons . kattrin invents a new way of communication with the deaf world.

Brecht via kattrin warns his people not to stop their protest even if they are dumb and the world is deaf. Brecht hints that human blight does not need only words, but action. The language proves to be useless in world that sheds its ears to its victims misery. This world cannot sheds its eyes and heart that are regarded here as loophole to be penetrated . She sends her agony in the form of articulated protest to the whole world. He wants to make from these simple voices a strong united cry against the injustice. From her sacrifice springs the bright life that will lead man to explore the hidden power inside himself . one should look for other languages to cope with the human dilemma. The whole entire world should learn that:

Every infant lying helpless, uncertain even of the boundaries of himself, in the center menacing universe, a vast lurbulent outside world, learns three languages : the cry of weakness and pain, roar of anger and demand, and the gurgle of placatory agreement .(he may in time learn the language of withdrawal or silence too) all languages he learns afterwards are combinations of these, and elaborations of these , and whatever else he may express with them, they continue to serve him as these originally did to control the universe and to reassure the terrifie baby still clicking inside him.(Bolakain 32).



The language of Kattrin is heard and stopped war, many people think of applying her way so any man can lock the path to war, can climb the ladder to roof and start beating the drum" (Martin 156). In spite of the primitive language that she uses, it is proved to be effective. Her death stands for the death selfishness person in selfish world and she represents love in loveless world. Brecht tries to purify the stage during her sacrifice to cope with her angelic decision. He devotes the stage at her death from any material person especially her mother who is absent during her death. The absence of the mother is necessary because she may stain the angelic atmosphere with selfish germs. Her altruism is for the survival of the humanity (Lawall 2208)

Brecht does not want his audience to react emotionally and bring tear for the fate of Kattrin his ambition surpasses this limited aim. He wants his society to react as a whole and he turns to be a revolutionary teacher who expects his people to be educated quickly and he hopes that audience come away from his plays with correct message" (Lamb 11). To avoid everything that obstacles his message in his play, he attends the rehearsal and asks his actors to use the third not the first person. Through tracing of the characters of **Mother Courage and Her Children**, one can be certain that every single person represent the attitudes of countries. Biff, Courage, Cook and officers stand for the profiteers of war while Kattrin represents the poor societies that are plagued with irresponsible. The poor society always pay blood for the cruel leaders. This is the lesson that Brecht insists on presenting through his works and the Brechtian conception in which "the audience is carried forward toward an understanding of emergent historical possibility" (Rabey 80). He succeeds in translation the suffer of people and the cruelty of political



system that he want to denounced publically and " he created theatrical scandals by their fearless outspokenness and reluctance to accept standards "(Furness41) . her heroism opens new stage with her new attitudes regarding change and her refusal to capitulate like her two brothers adds angelic halo on her. She is able to defy the whole world and refuses to surrender under any pressure. She fails to endure living in poisonous life. She turns to a model to be followed by others. Via Katrin Brecht provides various alternative to correct the world.

Brecht presents paradoxical views regarding war. He shows that everything is corrupted in this conflicting world. The meaning of victory and loss is mixed in war time . the loser is victorious . Katrin realizes that her personal ruin can participate in giving life for other generation that should continue her mission in saying no to war. The capitalists are pictured horribly when they do not care for the blood of the poor. Even in her burial her mother cannot stop her business . The mother represents the stubborn heads that insist on the benefit of war. Brecht varies the weapon that should be used against such criminals.

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