

Maternal Instincts in Bertolt Brecht's "Mother Courage and Her Children"

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Abstract

The research is concerned with the significance of the maternal instincts in Brecht's Mother Courage and her Children.

The portrait of a female in any society being a mother, a sister, a daughter, or a worker. The image of a woman in general and as a mother in particular as a great influence in life. The mother devotes her life for the demands of her children. Brecht deals with the mother as a business woman and how does she lose her children because of her greed and business. He tries to make his dramatic work as an instrument of a new idea for change.

Keywords: material, instincts, greed, business, change.

Chapter One

Introduction

Bertolt Brecht, the German playwright was born in 1898 and died in 1956. He was a dramatist and a poet whose "epic theory" was developed in 1920. He was considered in the 20th century one of the most efficacious playwright. He wrote for a socialist newspaper 1919 to 1921 and he was a member of the independent social democratic party. (Edwin & Flonam, 1993:16)

He married twice in his life. Before his first marriage he had many love relationships. He grew up as a protestant because his mother was a protestant. Early in life he developed communist kindness and when he was twenty, he became a full-fledged communist. However, as a member, he never joined any communist party. He was sick when he was young, having a facial tic, and congenital heart condition. So, he was sent to relax in Sanitarium. He attended a protestant elementary school when he was six, then he attended private school. (Lall, 1995:6)

He was born in the town of Augsburg in Germany where his father was a director of a paper-mill, also he was the first ordinary workman. The situations of his family do not suit the breeding of the child as he did not feature himself in any field. When he went to the Augsburg German school, he always says that he did not learn from his teacher. He became a strict critic of the educational process of his country. When he was in the company of the young men, he improved a literary from their own culture interest, outside the

school. He felt highly attracted by the unconventional also loose lives of the poets Villon, Rimband, and Verlaine. He found himself working against the classical traditional of his country. (www.encyclopedia.com)

His professional life was interesting, he became to study medical at Munich university; But he did not find himself interested. As a student of drama and its techniques, he began to attend drama seminars at Munich university which presented by the professor Arthur Kutscher.

Brecht is being considered very well-known because of his revolutionary ideas about theatre. He is well-known for inventing a new theatrical style known as Epic Theatre. Brecht aimed to create a sense of detachment between the audience and the emotions typically evoked in traditional dramatic theatre. This approach was intended to foster a heightened awareness of the issues being explored by the dramatist., (Esslin, 1961: 5).

This play was written in Sweden during his exile for Germany.' Mother Courage and her Children' is divided into twelve scenes with nine songs. The first performance was in Zurich April 19th, 1941. In Paris was in 1945, and in London was in 1956 which brought his international reputation. The play revolves around the theme of motherhood. The analysis encompasses not only the capitalist structure, but also the domestic sphere. Brecht's work explores the effects of war on familial relationships, with a particular focus on the mother and her offspring, particularly in cases where the mother is the primary provider.

Brecht's play centers around the motif of motherhood, exploring the character of a mother who is portrayed as a shrewd businesswoman. The play depicts the mother's avarice and its consequences, including the loss of her children, in a strikingly vivid manner. Numerous playwrights have portrayed the impact of societal shifts on the role of the mother and her family, with Mother Courage serving as a quintessential and pivotal figure within this context. The portrayal of the family's struggles and social interactions serves to heighten the audience's awareness of their challenges and promote a greater sense of consciousness. (Martin and Ria, 2000: 1).

The goal of this research is to examine the character of Mother Courage and her impact on the development of her offspring. The maternal figure is commonly linked with affection, compassion, altruism, benevolence, and abnegation. Maternal figures serve as both the origin of existence and a safeguard for individuals. She personifies vitality and existence. Furthermore, she serves as an emblem of ethical principles and poise. The journey of maternity is a significant and profound spiritual pursuit for women to

undertake. The mother provides her offspring with essential elements for survival such as a secure and consistent living environment, formal instruction, and unwavering affection and assistance. Maternal behavior encompasses not only the physiological process of giving birth, but also the emotional and behavioral actions of providing love, protection, and nurturing to offspring. The primary responsibility of the mother is to raise a child with care, love, and in a manner that promotes their well-being and development. This task is commonly perceived as an inherent responsibility of mothers.

The Plot

The play portrays the sad experience of a woman called Mother Courage in the path of war. The story is to be imagined as having taken place in the course of war about a dozen years of a real war known as the thirty years' war which started in 1618 and ended 1648 with some intervals of peace during that long time. The protagonist's name is Anna Fierling but she is known as Mother Courage because of some act of bravery which she had done in mood of desperation. This woman has a wagon which serves as a liquor-bar as a shop selling various goods to the soldiers. The canteen follows the Swedish regiment where the soldiers go in the course of war between protestant countries and the Roman countries. Mother Courage was inside of the Swedish protestant army. She has three grown up children, a daughter and two sons. The sons are Eilif and Feyos whose nick name is Swiss cheese, while the girl is dumb, her name is Kattrin. The three children had different fathers. The mother was regarded as a kind of widow. She determined to earn her living and support her family from the war. The Swedish leadership was Gustavus, a recruiting officer who was supported by a Swedish sergeant. He was searching to recruit more soldiers who were needed for the Swedish expedition in Poland. Anna was stopped by the recruiting officer and the sergeant wanted to join the two sons to the army (www. gradesever, com).

Mother Courage, being preoccupied with the prospect of a transaction, allowed the officer to lead Eilif away, ultimately resulting in his death after a few years of service in the war. Then Swiss cheese had taken a job as a regiment's paymaster but the soldiers shot him because he hides the regiment's pay ox. The daughter was killed when she beats the drums trying to awake the town people, but before Kattrin dies, she was successful in alerting the town. In the end Mother Courage lost all her children because of the war that she wanted to earn from. (Lall, 1995:13-14).

Chapter Two

Maternal Instincts in 'Mother Courage and Her Children'

Nurturing and protecting one's child appears to be natural maternal instinct which one calls paternal duty. Mother Courage seems to be caring and loving mother by her words but not always by her deeds though. The audience sees Mother Courage fail to act as a parent and safeguard her children. Her three children perished during the war, because her protective instincts got weak and did not defend them from war menaces.

By naming her Mother Courage, Brecht was ironic. From the beginning of the play, it is anticipated that the female protagonist will exhibit significant bravery in her efforts to safeguard her offspring during the period of conflict. Upon elucidating the significance of her nomenclature, it becomes evident that her level of bravery was not commensurate with her initial impression. The speaker asserts that she has been bestowed with the moniker "Mother Courage" due to her apprehension of being ruined. She recounts her experience of traversing through the bombardment of Riga with great fervor, akin to that of a frenzied woman, while carrying a substantial quantity of fifty bread leaves in her cart (Brecht, 1939 : 25). So, her real value is not the courage she has to protect her children, but the strong will to keep up her business. She cares more about her merchandising business than about her three children. As a mother, she appears to be diminishing. Her natural maternal instincts appear to be permanently dormant.

Degradation of maternal instincts in the time of war is not the major message Brecht wants his audience to get. The implications of this idea seal with setting life priorities by people; Often one values wrong things. Maternal values take over some human or ethical values in life.

Mother Courage seems to be passive because she does not fight to protect herself and her family's financial concern overshadows her maternal instincts. The wartime has sharpened her financial interests and instincts for material enrichment. Despite the devastating effects of war, including the loss of all her children, the woman remained unchanged. Her primary focus was on her business of vending various commodities from her cart. (Exclusive Paper Com).

Brecht provokes his audience to analyze the events of the play and make their own conclusions regarding human values and life priorities. Everyone choses the life path she/he is willing to follow distributing life priorities alongside the path. (Ibid.)

Anna Fierling is the true identity of "mother courage." In Riga, she became known as "Mother Courage" after braving the bombardment to deliver her bread to customers. She is the proud mother of two sons and a girl. She spent the final scene of the play by herself with her canteen while monitoring the conflict across Europe. She has a complex personality, full of contradictions: she is honest, brave, and smart, but she can't put her work aside to defend her kids, but at the end she lost her children because of her tread, (www, gradesaver. Com)

Her daughter Kattrin is promised that she can have a husband when the war ends and the peace comes, though she is deformed by the swoop. She is obsessed with babies and children. She is a courage dump daughter, characterizing herself as the character who is most clearly suffers from the harm of war. She was killed when she tried to warn the town about the siege of the enemies. (www, sparknotes. com).

Eilif was the eldest and the favorite son to his mother. He is kind of a thug, though she thinks him, brave and dashing. In the first scene, the recruiting officer enlists him, and then he begins to enjoy the conflict. He was executed for killing civilians during a time of peace, despite being lauded by the general for killing peasants and stealing their livestock. Mother Courage is never informed of his passing.

The younger son is Swiss Cheese. His mother thinks he is very honest. Brecht portrays him as an idiotic figure. As the second finish regiment's paymaster, he seeks to keep the cashbox hidden until the Catholics take over, at which point he will return it to his general. Swiss Cheese is promptly beheaded after being apprehended with the cash box. (Lall, 1995.106).

Yvette was without decency. She has relationships with the soldiers. After falling in love with the cook, she follows the army Then, Swiss Cheese was arrested by the Catholic, she picked up a colonel and persuaded him to give her money to buy the wagon of the Mother Courage. In the end, the death of Swiss Cheese means that she will not buy the wagon and the deal does not forward. Yvette reappeared , and she married the colonel's brother who was rich. So, she sold herself for a fair price to the war. She was the only person to benefit from the conflict at the expense of her beauty. (www. gradesaver. Com). The Swedish general employs the cook. He shows up when Mother Courage argues with him about how much a capon should cost. He is deeply cynical and out from the combat. Later he stops company with her because she declines his offer to co-manage his recently acquired Utrecht business.

The Chaplain is a total coward and a hypocrite, switching religious loyalty with a twist of a priestly robe, and the Chaplain appears bitter, if not smarmy, throughout the play. Throughout the play, he moans that his priestly gifts are being wasted, but the virtue that one might expect from a religious man appears to be continuously absent in him. (www. gradesaver. Com).

Mother Courage has to be away from her kids a lot because of work. She always seems to be so preoccupied with making a profit that she misses the birth of her kid. She is always working, even when her kids need her the most.

she has been unsuccessful in attaining her objective of securing the safety of both her business and her offspring. The individual endeavors to safeguard her offspring, yet her inclination towards financial gain results in their estrangement. The mother and children are subject to the adverse effects of societal circumstances. The individual's impoverished upbringing resulted in their mother pursuing morally questionable occupations or accepting low-paying work despite the presence of more favorable living conditions and opportunities for betterment.

Chapter Three

The Theme of War in 'Mother Courage and Her Children'

Hitler's invasion of Poland in 1939 inspired the drama. One of the best anti-war dramas ever written, it was a scathing attack on the fascist ideology of Nazi Germany. It takes place during the 17th century. The story depicts a lady who, after thirty years of war, forces her children to sell food to the soldiers by wheeling a cart through many unfavorable environments. Even when the children are killed one by one because of the war, she continues to run her business there. After the death of her last child, she continues working while singing a lullaby and making funeral arrangements. (www.therntagenes.com).

Brecht's goal was to demonstrate how the mother exemplified the horrors of war and the lust for power by putting her children in harm's way for her own business venture during the war. Her role was meant to encourage viewers to embrace revolutionary principles and reject Nazi Germany's militarism. The theme of the play is futility of the war, its destructiveness and the merciless slaughter of innocent civilians, apart from premature death of countless soldiers. The play witnesses the dreadful nature of war in the scene in which Swiss Cheese is killed, Katrin is attacked and badly wounded by a drunken soldier. She is killed by the firing of a gun of the catholic lieutenant. Tragic indeed is the ultimate plight of the mother who has lost all her

children because of the war, though she is under the impression that one of her children is still alive. In this connection, one must recall that according to Brecht himself. The purpose of this play was to caution the global community that in the event of another world war, which appeared highly likely, the resulting ruin and devastation would be indescribable. The playwright utilized the Thirty Years' War as a contextual backdrop for his work with the explicit intention of portraying the abhorrent realities of warfare, thereby cautioning the authoritarian leaders and military strategists of his era against instigating another global conflict. However, World War 11 started within only a few months of Brecht's finishing the play; and the destruction which this war caused exceeded. He might himself have visualized because even when he could not at the time imagine that a weapon like the unclear bomb would be invented. (Lall, 1995: 15-16).

Mother Courage as an Anti-War Play

In *Mother Courage and Her Children*, Brecht wanted to show the effects of war in a way that would make viewers and people who were looking forward to the play angry and against those who wanted to start another war. So, after seeing this play, he was sad that the mother hadn't learned anything from the war because she chose to keep running a business that depends on the war going on. Still, Brecht hoped that his readers and audience would learn something, even if she did not. But the readers and the audience learn nothing. Not has anybody learnt anything from this play even today because wars, or civil wars, on and even more destructive scale are going on all over the world. (Lall, 1995: 134)

The play's events are meant to demonstrate the devastating effects of war and to inspire anti-war sentiment in its audience and readers in order to forewarn the nations of the globe of the impending threat of another global conflict. World War 11 actually started a few months after this play was finished. Brecht's warning was unnecessary, and even if it had arrived on time, no one would have listened to it since dictators like Hitler and Mussolini do not care. (Ibid; 141).

Subsequently, one can see that the war has destroyed and ruined so much of the land that there is almost no food left. Even *Mother Courage* and her daughter, who now have the cook as their friend, are almost too hungry to eat. The cook has to sing a song to get the attention of the people in a parsonage and make them feel sorry for him. The song is very touchy. The voice comes from the parsonage at the end of the song, offering a little soup

to the cook and his companion. How can one not despise war when witnessing or reading about such gruesome spectacles? (Ibid.)

The sympathy for Mother Courage is great, but it is slightly diluted by her callousness towards the wounded persons and towards other people's children; but the sympathy for Katrin is not diminished by any circumstances whatever or by any negative traits in her character. Indeed, the sympathy for Katrin may be described as empathy which means the feeling of complete identification with her. She is probably the worst victim of war because she is at first disabled by the war, then disfigured and mutilated by the war, and then killed by the war. While Mother Courage desires a continuance of the war for her own selfish purposes Katrin longs for peace with its normal blessings of marriage and motherhood that is what she wants. Thus, she may be regarded in symbolic terms as a figure of peace. The compassionate nature symbolizes the essential femininity of the female sex. (Lall, 1995: 220)

The cruelty of the war is pictured in naked form. Many protestants have been wounded. A baby has been wrecked by the enemy. Here one feels considerable estranged from Mother Courage because she refuses to give any linen to the chaplain for the making of bandages to dress the wounds of protestant. One also feels estranged from her because she scolds Katrin of having risked her own life in rescuing the baby, and then for lavishing her affection on the baby.

The theme of maternal instincts is developed and in fact, highlighted here. Mother Courage fails both as a human being and as a mother, because she refuses to give any linen to help the wounded persons, and she fails as a mother because she scolds Katrin for showing affection for a stranger's child.

In contrast to Mother Courage, Katrin the dump daughter shows her maternal instincts in full play. Not only she rescues the baby, but also keeps it in her arms, rocking it and humming a lullaby to it (Brecht, 1939: 45-46).

Conclusion

Brecht conducted an analysis of the issues prevalent during his era. The individual in question is primarily focused on the portrayal of devastating conflicts with the aim of cautioning the populace against their occurrence. In the play, one of his main goals was to show how bad materialism, violence, killing, opportunism, and selfishness are. He tries to fix these social and political problems because they make life an evil fight to stay alive. In this way, he makes life an eternal fight to stay alive. In this way, people like Swiss Cheese and Katrin have no place in the world. Actually, Mother

Courage and Her Children is an attack on war, which kills both the guilty and the innocent. Kattrin and Swiss Cheese are the only good characters in the play, and their deaths are meant to betray what they stand for. The things Eilif did show how poor people can be used to fuel a war. Brecht makes a mocking attack on soldiers who pretend to fight for glory and honor through Eilif's part in the play.

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غرائز الامومة في مسرحية برتولت بريخت " الام شجاعة واولادها"

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مستخلص البحث:

يدور البحث حول غرائز الامومة في مسرحية بريخت "الام شجاعة واولادها" فهو يتحدث عن المرأة بصورة عامة والام على وجه الخصوص لما لديها من تأثير في كل مجالات الحياة فدورها صعب حيث تكرر حياتها لمتطلبات الاهتمام والعناية باطفالها وتزويدهم بالامور الحياتية. تدخل الام معترك الحياة وتضحي بنفسها من اجلهم. يركز بريخت على المرأة العاملة وكيف خسرت اطفالها بسبب الجشع والطمع في تصوير حيواتها وتفاصيل وحوادث وظروف تطورت عبر المسرحية فهو يحاول جعل هذا العمل الادبي اداة و مصدرا لافكار جديدة من اجل التغيير.