



An Exile of the Black Forests: Characterising Bertolt Brecht as an Intellectual Through His Theatrical Practice

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ABSTRACT

Bertolt Brecht's is a name associated with both intellectual and practical involvement in twentieth-century theatre. This essay focuses on Brecht's intellectual identity as well as his views on intellectualism and ultimately his role as a political artist in transforming society. Brecht's experience of inequality and oppression throughout his life played a significant role in shaping his intellectual and artistic identity, which is marked by a feeling of not belonging and restlessness. The essay delves into his intellectual approach in general alongside his critique of intellectuals that surfaces in his plays, *Life of Galileo* (1938-43) and *Turandot or Whitewashers' Congress* (1953). Additionally, Brecht's short story, *Socrates Wounded* (1938-39), exemplifies his emphasis on practical philosophy and critical engagement with the material world. Brecht's critique of intellectuals, epitomized in the concept of 'Tui', further underscores his disdain for those who align with oppressive powers. This essay explores Brecht's intellectual legacy, emphasising his commitment to social transformation through art, philosophy, and relentless questioning. Through a comprehensive analysis of his life and works, this discussion illuminates Brecht's profound impact on the realm of intellectualism and his enduring influence as a political artist, challenging individuals to confront social complexities and engage in transformative intellectual endeavour. **Keywords:** Bertolt Brecht, Intellectual, Life of Galileo, Turandot or Whitewashers' Congress, Theatre



Introduction

“I, Bertolt Brecht, come from the black forests.
My mother carried me into the cities
As I lay in her body. And the cold of the forests
Will be in me till I die.”

Bertolt Brecht, *Of Poor B. B.*

While what defines an intellectual may be debatable from different viewpoints, Bertolt Brecht's is a name that would certainly appear on a list of the twentieth century's most remarkable intellectuals. Having lived through a series of catastrophic events and disturbing times such as the First World War, the Great Depression, the failure of the Weimar Republic, the rise of Nazis in Germany, McCarthyism, and the Second World War, Brecht encountered and endured various acts of inequality, despotism, and exploitation throughout his life, spending a considerable part of it in exile. The chaotic atmosphere of his age was nevertheless instrumental in forming his intellectual and artistic identity producing in him a discernible difficulty to belong to the world immediately surrounding him. As the lines of his poetry above demonstrate, to Brecht, his origins were to be found not at the heart of civilisation but in the black forests; he felt a strong sense of un-belonging in the world immediately surrounding him. Black forests seem to have an abiding influence over Brecht, an influence he identifies as a sense of coldness. Whether it was a sense of wildness and aggressivity or a feeling of distance which characterises this influence, it is possible to argue that it also is the source of his intellectual strength and tough temper.

Despite being the son of a well-to-do middle-class family, Brecht seems to have spent his life as an exile of the black forests and harboured a sense of restlessness in a world made essentially of class divisions and injustice, which turned him into an aloof figure, a non-conformist, and a Marxist rebel before the established systems. To Brecht, the proletarian class was “reinforced to a negligible and uncertain extent by the renegade intellectuals” (2001, p. 189). He thought the intellectuals of his time connived with the capitalist scheme against which he positioned his intellect. Moving from this premise, the objective of this essay is to form a comprehensive discussion about Brecht's intellectual identity and his views on intellectualism by merging several aspects of the practitioner's life and profession. While his acclaimed approach to theatre is quite crucial

in giving a general idea about his understanding of intellectualism and his critique of the intellectuals of his age noteworthy in this regard, two of his plays, *Life of Galileo* (1938-43) and *Turandot or Whitewashers' Congress* (1953) should also be closely examined as they are centred around intellectual figures. Moreover, Brecht's short story *Socrates Wounded* (1938-39)¹ also provides remarkable insight into Brecht's notion of intellectualism as he portrays the philosopher in a certain way which is connected to his own belief system. Therefore, this short story will serve as an introductory piece in opening up the discussion. The assumption on which this essay is pillared is that a multi-layered discussion of intellectualism, where a diverse practitioner like Brecht is concerned, will prove more illustrative and encompassing.

Theatre, Dialectics and Transformation: Brecht's Intellectual Legacy

For Brecht, known early on for his anti-exploitation writings, art, especially his political theatre, was a means of educating and thereby changing society. In order to achieve this purpose, he leaned on Marxist theory and challenged the conventional heritage of dramatic theatre, which he thought was comfortably static. In doing so, he positioned his understanding of theatre against a centuries-long tradition of theatrical practice. Brecht structured his epic theatre by meticulously experimenting with novel techniques of representation. His theoretical writings often disclose a fervent spirit as he expresses his firm belief in transforming the world by awakening in the minds of the audiences the possibility of change. He was not only an exceptional theorist but a visionary in that his theatrical practice was completely on a par with his aim to transform the world. One of the main strategies he employed was to disable empathy by removing the fourth wall that separated the actors from the audience in the theatre building. He aimed for a forceful theatre that would initiate critical thinking by requiring an alienating level of involvement. In epic theatre, art as a form of political activity, proved to be a direct method of pedagogy for the oppressed. Pushing his audiences to see beyond the blinding restrictions of the regimes surrounding them and reminding them of the possibility of transformation on various levels of theatrical representation, Brecht's epic

1 While other plays by Brecht, such as *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939), *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (1941), and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1944), undoubtedly offer valuable insights into the thematic concerns of this article, the works under scrutiny here distinguish themselves through their sophisticated exploration of intellectual engagement with power, ideology and social change. By concentrating on these specific texts, this study aims to maintain a focused and coherent trajectory, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of Brecht's perspectives within the defined parameters of the article's scope.

theatre served as a space of rebellion, and from this viewpoint, it remains one of the most tangible examples of artistic intellectuality being put into action.

Brecht's anti-Aristotelian approach to theatre is also marked by a return to Socrates' dialectical method.² His theory is firmly established upon a dialectical method which is instrumental in delivering epic theatre's central idea of transformation through its emphasis on development. All his literary and theatrical work aside, Brecht deserves credit as he is the foremost theatre practitioner who noted the link between dialectics and theatre and introduced the dialectical method to theatre both as a principle of progress and by means of techniques such as the 'not-but' and interrupting the narrative to debate the issues at hand with the audience. His development of aesthetics based on this method appears, in itself, to be a tribute to his intellectual capacity to lead and to reform.

As Anthony Squiers notes, if Brecht turns to Socrates in dark times, it is also "in hopes of seeing the un-foreclosed possibilities, liberating possibilities which are rendered through a willingness to perplex and a practical attitude toward philosophy" (2019a, p. 3). Brecht's purpose as a revolutionary thinker in revisiting the method of teaching popularised by Socrates is to encourage society to ask uncomfortable questions and to get them ready for even harder answers in line with Socrates' motto, "The unexamined life is not worth living". To Brecht, philosophy is the instrument that allows us to realise this. As a Marxist intellectual, he associates being involved in philosophy with being engaged with the material world, that is, being a philosopher of praxis. To understand Brecht's goal, Antonio Gramsci's definition of the philosophy of praxis would be helpful:

It [the philosophy of praxis] is consciousness full of contradictions, in which the philosopher himself, understood both individually and as an entire social group, not only grasps the contradictions, but posits himself as an element of the contradiction and elevates this element to a principle of knowledge and therefore of action. (1999, p. 747)

The contradictions of social life, for Brecht, are not mastered by keeping silent about them; on the contrary, one should endeavour to expose them. Thus, one must first be

2 As Brecht used dialectics as mainly a method of debate and furthering thought, it seems to be more appropriate to relate his dialectical approach to Socrates rather than Hegel or Marx despite the obvious Marxist basis of his theatre.

able to depict the empirical realities of the present day in order to expose the social contradictions. Only when social realities are grasped is it possible to alter social relations. Being a philosopher of praxis requires both knowledge and action.

Squiers observes that “Brecht’s willingness to perplex is an intellectual inclination to confront social life in all its complexity” (2019a, p. 3). He goes on to explain that understanding this complex system is a difficult task that requires looking at it from multiple perspectives, asking complicated questions and persistently seeking answers. “The willingness to perplex compels one to venture into foreign intellectual terrain, to transgress disciplinary boundaries” (Squiers, 2019a, pp. 3-4) which Brecht did frequently. Brecht emphasises the importance of critically and analytically engaging with the apparatuses that generate knowledge and experience in order to alter them. He believes that intervening in the material world through artistic representation is a requirement to effect social change. In his assessment of Brecht’s theatre, Jean-Paul Sartre points out that theatre had been dominated by a singular ideology serving the political interests of the bourgeoisie. By portraying reality as immutable in its representation of life through art, the bourgeoisie managed to convince the working class that the exploitative system in which they lived was natural. This resulted in a neutralisation of their ability to question and criticise the system, which then made it difficult for them to acquire a sense of class consciousness. Sartre argues that Brecht’s epic theatre emerged as a counterforce to this prevailing trend (1961, p. 5) and thus had a revolutionary character. Brecht criticised the bourgeois theatre of his time for inducing a sense of witchcraft or hypnotism in its audience, thereby reinforcing the status quo (2001, p. 38). Consequently, he sought to challenge this ideology through a new theoretical and practical approach to theatre. Thus, his epic theatre is intended to undermine hegemonic ideology and produce cognitive ambiguities that would lead people to conclude that humans are largely responsible for constructing their ideological and material realities.

In addition to being an intellectual, Brecht was also a tenacious critic of the intellectuals of his generation. In many of his works³, he expressed his disapproval of the intellectuals for their unwillingness, neglect, and inability to encourage social transformation. This seems to inform his short story *Socrates Wounded* which illustrates the importance of willingness to perplex as well as the readiness to engage in the material world, which, to him, is an intellectual requirement. He depicts Socrates in this story as a practical philosopher—a

3 Brecht’s notable works in which he criticises intellectuals are: “Intellectuals and Class Struggle” and *Tui Novel* (an unfinished satire on intellectuals).

man of action: “His [Socrates’s] skepticism in many spheres led to credulity in many others; he was against speculative thought and in favor of practical experience; so he did not believe in the gods, but he did believe in onions” (2015, p. 192). Socrates’s disbelief in the gods but belief in something as ordinary as onions can be seen as an example of his practical and materialistic approach. He believed in verifying ideas and theories via real experience rather than relying primarily on abstract reasoning or faith. This approach corresponds with Brecht’s emphasis on critical thinking and practical action in the face of social and political challenges. Thus, Brecht sees in Socrates a model for intellectual independence and critical thinking, which he believed was essential for social and political change. The story is briefly about Socrates, who witnesses the paradoxes of war and is hailed as a hero due to coincidental events that occur while he tries to flee the battlefield. He then unveils the truth despite all the negative consequences that might befall him. Although the story touches upon general moral codes, Brecht portrays Socrates as a man in action, as Squiers puts it: “Brecht prioritizes Socrates’s actions over his thoughts. It is what he does, not what he thinks that is important. This idea becomes even more apparent later in the story as Brecht’s Socrates struggles to choose a course of action” (2019b, p. 108). Despite all his internal contradictions and the possibility of being humiliated and punished by the authority in public, Socrates performs a noble act by speaking the truth.

In stark contrast with Socrates’s honourable attitude, however, Brecht suggests that the intellectuals of his generation have opted to work with power in a way that promotes their interests. In order to emphasise such treason of intellectuals, Brecht coined a new concept, ‘Tui’, which characterises a person who sells their talents and ideas as a commodity on the market or uses them to support the ruling ideology of a repressive society. Tui is an abbreviation for ‘Tellect-Ual-In’, which, as a strange pun on the concept of ‘intellectual’, seems to emphasise the failure of the intellectual’s role in society through its jumbling and shortening of the word. Brecht coined this term and employed it in a variety of critical and artistic initiatives, including the material for his so-called Tui-Novel—an unfinished parody on intellectuals—in the mid-1930s. Even though he could not complete his Tui-novel, Brecht was able to present some powerful plays based on his criticism of intellectuals.

Galileo and the Ethical Responsibilities of Intellectuals

The first play under discussion here is an excellent illustration of how Brecht uses historical events and characters to shed light on contemporary issues in an intellectual

way. In *Life of Galileo*, Brecht portrays the life of the famous scientist, Galileo Galilei, and his conflict with the Church⁴ over his discoveries and theories about the heliocentric model of the universe. This is a play that explores themes of scientific advancement and power struggles as well as the ethical responsibilities of intellectuals. There are three versions of *Life of Galileo*. The first version (Danish) was written in 1938-43 when Brecht was an exile in Denmark after the triumphs of Hitler in Germany. It was first performed in 1943 in Zurich. The plot of the play is more or less the same as that of the following two versions, which is basically the struggle between Galileo and the authorities. The major difference in the following versions lies in Brecht's attitude towards Galileo who cunningly retracts and accepts the authority of the Church so that he can complete his masterpiece, the *Discorsi*. The second version (American) was written in 1944-47 during the Second World War in collaboration with the English actor Charles Laughton. Shorter than the Danish one, in this version it looks like Brecht felt a need to change Galileo and a few minor characters in the aftermath of the Hiroshima bombing. Galileo, who initially outwits the Inquisition, eventually turns into a coward who betrays his people out of the fear of physical pain in these later versions. While Brecht seems to have praised Galileo's recantation which permits him to continue his work and propaganda in the first version, he now sees his act of recantation as the 'original sin' (1980, p. 126) and curses him in the following versions as a result of his disillusionment with the Second World War and the dropping of the atomic bomb. As Brenda Murphy notes: "Overnight the biography of the founder of the new system of physics read differently" (1999, p. 189). Brecht's evolving perspective reflects his broader views on science, politics, and power and how these intersect in society. His epic theatre was a way to challenge existing power structures and encourage audiences to engage critically with the world around them. His own restless and ever-evolving worldview is also reflected in his work, which seeks to push the boundaries of what is possible in theatre and encourage the audience to question their assumptions. In this sense, Brecht's theatre was not only a reflection of his own life but also a call to action for the audience to engage with the world in a critical and questioning way. Brecht, feeling dissatisfied with the American version of the play, later collaborated with Elisabeth Hauptmann, Benno Beson and Ruth Berlau to revise it (Berlin) in 1953. This new version, which restored many of the materials that Laughton had cut from the Danish version, was first performed by the Berliner Ensemble in 1957. Despite the restorations, Galileo's character in the Berlin version remains the same as in the American version.

4 In his notes on the play, Brecht specifically emphasises that the Church in the play is presented as a secular authority rather than solely a religious one. He suggests that the Church's ideology is interchangeable with that of many other secular authorities, implying that the Church is not fundamentally different from other institutions that wield political power. (Brecht, 1980, p. 125)

In all versions of the play, Galileo informs the Church that he recants his studies in which he challenges the doctrine of religion with his newly developed theory of heliocentrism but he continues his studies in secret. He continues to work on his masterpiece, *Discorsi*, which he smuggled out of the country with the help of his pupil, Andre, who praises this act of Galileo. In the first version, through the words of Andrea, Brecht defines this as a moral act to protect and promote the truth in oppressive civilisations: “You gained the leisure to write a scientific work which could be written by nobody else. If you had ended up at the stake in a halo of flames the other side would have won” (1980, p. 106). With this clever act, Galileo, thus, seems to shed light on truth in the age of scholasticism. Brecht delivered this interpretation of his play in the original version written in the 1930s in an effort to uplift intellectuals persecuted by Nazi tyranny. At the time, he believed that any means was justified to protect the truth, which apparently included lying in the name of the truth. After the Second World War and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, however, Brecht’s attitude towards Galileo changed radically: he no longer regarded Galileo’s recantation as a clever strategy to uphold the truth, but rather as a betrayal and a shameful submission to conservative forces. He changes the end of the play in the following versions where Galileo interrupts his pupil’s hymns of praise to prove that his recantation was a crime and could not be absolved by the significance of his latest work (1980, p. 131). He also admits that when he recanted, he did not really do so to continue his work, but rather out of fear of physical pain:

Galileo: Presumably for the principle that science’s sole aim must be to lighten the burden of human existence. If the scientists, brought to heel by self-interested rulers, limit themselves to piling up knowledge for knowledge’s sake, then science can be crippled and your new machines will lead to nothing but new impositions. You may in due course discover all that there is to discover, and your progress will nonetheless be nothing but a progress away from mankind. The gap between you and it may one day become so wide that your cry of triumph at some new achievement will be echoed by a universal cry of horror. – As a scientist I had unique opportunity. In my day astronomy emerged into the marketplace. Given this unique situation, if one man had put up a fight it might have had tremendous repercussions. (Brecht, 1980, pp.108-109)

Galileo admits that he betrayed his profession by not defending and fighting for his beliefs when astronomy became popular in the markets. He believes that if he took a

stand and fought for his beliefs, it could potentially have far-reaching consequences and change the course of history. He also acknowledges that failure to do so allows the authorities to misuse its expertise for their own purposes. Despite his failure, Galileo's admission that something would have changed if he had stood firm is important in sending a message to the audience, potentially activating in them the ideal of transformation.

In Scene II, Brecht portrays Galileo as a man who is driven by a passion for scientific discovery but who also recognises the need to earn a living and comfort by selling his knowledge to those who can pay for it: "Today a world-famous scholar is offering you and you alone, a highly marketable tube [telescope], for you to manufacture and sell as and how you wish" (Brecht, 1980, p. 20). This might be understandable when it comes to creating a space for a scientist to focus on their studies. It also seems that Brecht was not at odds with this idea in the first version of the play. However, as Brecht discovered during the Second World War, the outcome of handing knowledge to an authority is disastrous:

The bourgeois single out science from the scientist's consciousness, setting it up as an island of independence so as to be in practice to interweave it with *their* politics, *their* economics, *their* ideology. The research scientist's object is 'pure' research; the product of that research is not so pure. The formula $E = mc^2$ is conceived of as eternal, not tied to anything. Hence other people can do the tying: suddenly the city of Hiroshima became very short-lived. The scientists are claiming the irresponsibility of machines. (1980, p. 121)

The quotation appears to be a critique of the way science is often treated as an isolated and independent entity when it is strongly intertwined with politics, economics, and ideology. Brecht argues that while the object of scientific research may be pure, the product of that research can be used for either positive or negative purposes. The example given of Einstein's formula highlights this point, as the formula itself is neutral and independent, however, the way it was used in the development of the atomic bomb had devastating consequences for the people of Hiroshima. Brecht contends that scientists cannot claim the same level of irresponsibility as machines because they are conscious agents capable of understanding the social and political implications of their work. Assuming a machine-like quality by simply focusing on bringing out scientific

novelties, scientists abdicate the ethical responsibility for how their work may be utilised. Since the knowledge produced by scientists is ultimately disassociated from the social environment in which it is created, scientists, like other workers, are alienated from their products under capitalism. Their work is frequently focused on profit and technological advancement rather than meeting the needs of society as a whole since they operate in a system that privileges efficiency and productivity over human needs and moral considerations.

The example of Galileo illustrates the conflict between the pursuit of knowledge and the pressures of society. Galileo's desire for recognition and funding led him to compromise his principles and ultimately recant his views under pressure from the Church. Brecht regards this as a betrayal of the scientific ideals of seeking the truth and advancing knowledge as well as the beginning of the corruption of modern natural sciences. That is why he considers Galileo's recantation as the "original sin of modern natural sciences" (Brecht, 1980, p. 126). According to Brecht, this compromise represents a turning point in the history of science, as it marks the point at which scientific inquiry became subordinated to the interests of the authorities rather than serving human liberation and progress. Thus, as Frederic Ewen notes: "The hymn to the new age at the beginning is balanced by the sad confessional at the end" (1970, p. 345). All the great technologies and discoveries of the day, according to Brecht, have come to pose an even greater threat to humankind since innovators and explorers have handed over their labour to the governments. Brecht believed that art should not simply entertain but also challenge the audience's worldview and inspire them to take action. By historicising Galileo's life and presenting his struggles against the authorities, Brecht aims to show that intellectuals like Galileo have a social responsibility to use their knowledge for the welfare of society rather than serving the interests of the ruling class.

At the beginning of the play, Brecht presents Galileo as a strong and dedicated individual who is willing to risk his life for his research. This is especially noticeable in his behaviour during the plague in Chapter Five, where he is fiercely committed to continuing his research despite the ongoing grave peril. However, as the play progresses, Galileo's courage begins to wane, and he becomes more susceptible to fear and weakness. This change in Galileo's character seems to be an intentional artistic strategy employed by Brecht to challenge the audience's perceptions of historical heroes, inviting them to scrutinise the flaws and weaknesses of human nature. Brecht's approach to the play

is also notable for its use of epic theatre techniques. Rather than creating an illusion of reality on stage, Brecht interrupts the flow of the play and frequently employs an alienating use of light and props to disrupt the audience's immersion in the play. By breaking the organic unity of dramatic theatre, he is able to present the play as a series of episodes that explore various moral concerns and contemporary social realities.

One of the central concerns of the play is the relationship between truth and power, which is a recurring theme in Brecht's work. Through Galileo's struggles with the Church and his eventual recantation, Brecht exposes the ways in which power structures can distort and suppress the truth. By urging his audience to think critically about the arguments of all characters and form their own conclusions, Brecht encourages them to question the validity of dominant power structures and to seek out alternative perspectives. Brecht also attempts to draw a link between Galileo's failure and the intellectuals of his time through the play. As Clarks puts it:

For Brecht there had been only one type of intellectual in the past: the 'reactionary' or bourgeois intellectual 'who blended into the ruling class', was committed only to art for art's sake, and served only the interests of the elite [...] As he saw it, intellectuals - at least those who had corrupted and misused the intellect - were largely responsible for the decline of the Weimar Republic and the victory of the Nazis. (2006, p. 455)

Brecht criticised the intellectual and creative establishments of the day, stressing that they had ignored social and political realities. In a time of political unrest and social upheavals, he contended, the traditional role of the intellectual as an objective and disinterested observer of the world was no longer viable. Instead, it was the responsibility of the artist and intellectual to engage with the world and employ their skills to affect social change. Brecht was particularly critical of bourgeois intellectuals since he thought they were to blame for the rise of fascism and the fall of the Weimar Republic. According to him, the bourgeois intellectuals were corrupted by their proximity to authority and thus became disconnected from the needs and aspirations of the common people. Although Brecht portrays the betrayal of intellectuals in *Life of Galileo*, he thinks that the situation in the play can well be reversed. In his article, "Intellectuals and Class Struggle", which was originally written in German approximately in 1926 and translated by David Bathrick into English in 1973, Brecht writes:

It was precisely in wartime that *the commodity character of the intellect* revealed itself unfavorably. On the other hand, the behavior of German intellectuals proved that when their feelings are involved in something, they are able to place their own 'ideas at the service of the cause,' or even the ideas of others - for example, of dead intellectuals; and if greater effort is needed, then they will 'serve the cause' for just a modest increase in pay. (p. 19)

In his critique of 'the commodity character of the intellect,' Brecht makes the implication that intellectuals are driven more by a desire for financial gain than by a passionate belief in their positions. However, he also asserts that intellectuals can be very helpful when they are motivated by their emotions and willing to put their ideas to work for a cause because it shows that ideas can serve as the basis for action and that intellectuals can have a significant impact on influencing public opinion and political action. As a result, he argues that the proletariat may employ intellectuals in a number of ways as long as they are motivated by an appropriate cause and adequately paid.

***Turandot* and the Intellectual in the Marketplace**

Brecht draws a parallel between Galileo's downfall and the modern-day intellectuals in his relatively lesser-known play, *Turandot or Whitewashers' Congress*, which focuses on intellectuals selling their ideas in marketplaces. Even though this play appears to be anti-intellectual, here Brecht reverses the intellectual breakdown he depicted in *Life of Galileo*. This time he makes a distinction among intellectuals and pits a revolutionary intellectual character against the reactionary intellectuals who offer their ideas for sale. The play consists of ten major scenes and the story opens with a scarcity of cotton in China due to the cotton monopoly being held by the emperor and his brother Yao Yel. As the common people suffer from the scarcity of cotton and hence the increasing prices, the emperor and his brother expect the prices to increase even more, allowing them to make greater profits. This leads the clothesmakers and people without clothes to unite in protest against the emperor. Kai Ho, a former Tui, organises an uprising and informs the people about the reason for the cotton shortage. The emperor calls a meeting of intellectuals, known as the Tui Congress, and offers a reward for the best explanation (whitewashing) for cotton prices. Turandot, the emperor's daughter, is the reward for the Tui providing the most convincing justification to strengthen the authority of the emperor and alleviate the unrest in society. However, several competitors, who

are Tuis, cannot provide credible justifications and are executed as a result. At that point, Gogh comes up with a plan to quell the uprisings, instructing his men to burn half the cotton while blaming the Tuis for it. This strategy not only undermines the Tuis' credibility but also reinforces the emperor's reliance on Gogh and his gang for protection. Gogh also tortures Tuis and forces Turandot to marry him. He also tries to take control of the palace, but he fails when Kai Ho's followers break in. Brecht's central critique in the play seems to be of the role of European intellectuals in shaping public opinion. Intellectuals have traditionally served as the representatives of the people, using their knowledge and education to advocate for the common good. This appears to have changed over time. Instead of serving the people, intellectuals had become self-serving, manipulating public opinion whenever it suited their interests. This, according to Brecht, was a hazardous trend since it permitted tyrants and dictators to rise to power. These intellectuals might establish a false feeling of consensus by manipulating public opinion, making it easier for authoritarian leaders to grab control and hold power by silencing disagreement and crushing resistance.

The Tuis' domination of the public sphere, according to Brecht, undermines its fundamental emancipatory role, namely the advancement of welfare. The Tuis, like European intellectuals, constantly engage in speeches and actions that obscure class relations. The clearest example of this in the play is the competition to justify the lie of the emperor hoarding cotton to raise prices. The congress, attended by the emperor, the Tuis, the union of clothesmakers, and Sen (a peasant), representing the public, is therefore nothing more than a mechanism of oppression. As Munka Du, one of the chief Tuis, says: "Just as there is always a tennis court for people who want to play tennis, so there is always an explanation for people who want to believe" (Brecht, 2004, p. 148). His words reveal that the Tuis can manipulate public opinion in support of the status quo mainly because people are willing to believe. Henry J. Schmidt also notes: "Public debate within the Congress of Whitewashers is thus an opiate, not a productive interchange" (1980, p. 291). The reference to the Whitewashers' Congress suggests that public debate is often a sham used to placate the public rather than engage in productive discourse. Brecht saw this kind of discourse as an opiate serving to pacify the public rather than to inspire them toward action. Munka Du also talks about culture, ethics, virtue and patience, tactfully remaining clear of any mention of poverty, which is the main issue that arises due to the monopoly of the emperor: "Your Imperial Majesties, Gentlemen! Let us speak no more of cotton, but instead of the virtues which a people needs in order to go without cotton" (Brecht, 2004, p. 163). This statement mirrors

Brecht's critique of the Frankfurt School intellectuals, who, he believed, used culture and discourse to maintain their power and prevent meaningful social change (See Schmidt, 1980, pp. 296-97). His critique of the Frankfurt School intellectuals including Thomas Mann, Igor Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, Theodor W. Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, suggests that they commercialised culture and promoted works that were formulaic, unchallenging, and ultimately unengaging. Brecht saw this as a dangerous trend, as they were more concerned with abstract theoretical ideas than with addressing the concrete realities of social inequality and oppression. By focusing on cultural and philosophical issues, they avoided addressing the structural and economic causes of social injustice.

For Brecht, the betrayal of the intellectuals of his time consisted of a series of intellectual tricks that would mislead people and divert their attention from the real problem instead of exposing the root of social exploitation. In the play, *Munka Du*, like other great Tuis, also focuses on irrelevant issues and abstract formulations rather than addressing the root causes of the shortage of cotton. Thus, it seems that their rhetoric becomes an end in itself. It appears to provide answers, while in reality its abstract formulations obscure the truth and excuse the arbitrary and unjust exercise of power. By putting on a linguistic mask, the Tuis isolate themselves from the common people and exaggerate their own importance (Schmidt, 1980, p. 292). According to Brecht, the discussion of morality, virtue, and equality without considering economic conditions is a technique that employs hegemony over the lower classes. As Louis Althusser points out in his book *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1970), the state employs various organisations such as schools, the media, religion, and culture to maintain its dominant ideology and exert control over society. Intellectuals, as creators and disseminators of ideas, play a critical part in this process. By creating a false narrative of the emperor as a hero who is saving the people from corruption and disorder, the Tuis and the Tui Congress vividly demonstrate how the ideological state apparatuses function in Brecht's play as they use their power and influence to manipulate public opinion.

Althusser also argues that intellectuals are classified either as ideological professionals working for the ruling authority or as revolutionary intellectuals taking responsibility for the ideological struggle of the proletariat under the Marxist ideology. Similarly, Brecht's play features a revolutionary intellectual named Kai Ho who fights for a just redistribution of the land. Although Kai Ho does not have any dialogue in the play, his

actions, and their impact on the people of China are reported by the Tuis. Kai Ho serves as a symbol of the revolutionary struggle and the importance of the working class in achieving social change. By organising and leading the people of China, Kai Ho raises their consciousness and inspires them to fight for their rights and interests. In doing so, he embodies Brecht's Marxist ideology and the idea of revolutionary intellectuals working for the proletariat. Schmidt suggests that "Kai Ho remains unseen because he personifies the goal itself, whereas Brecht focuses upon the historical progression toward that" (1980, p. 296). While Kai Ho represents the ideal of social justice, Brecht's focus on historical progression emphasises the importance of understanding and challenging the structures that prevent this ideal from being realised in the present. Overall, the presence of Kai Ho in the play reflects Brecht's belief in the importance of the alliance between intellectuals and the working class in the struggle for social change as outlined in his article "Intellectuals and Class Struggle".

As a micro illustration of capitalism, the Tui community denies the existence of class conflict in order to maintain their privileges in the free market where they sell their ideas. The worth of their ideas is directly proportional to their ability to numb society. Kai Ho and his comrades, on the other hand, distribute leaflets that expose all the facts of the class conflict and the real cause of the cotton shortage. In other words, the Tuis, as ideological professionals, serve to maintain the dominant ideology and the interests of the ruling class, while Kai Ho and his comrades, as revolutionary intellectuals, seek to challenge and subvert the dominant ideology in the interests of the proletariat. From this point of view, the leaflets distributed by Kai Ho and his comrades and Brecht's epic theatre have similar purposes: to raise awareness and mobilise the public.

Sen, a peasant, who visits the city to become a Tui but witnesses the frauds and contradictions of the Tui at the conference he attends and gives up being a Tui, is another positive intellectual character in the play. Sen serves as a bridge between the two worlds of the play. His transformation from a supporter of the Tuis into a revolutionary thinker highlights the importance of critical thinking and the potential for change in the face of oppression. Brecht presents Sen as an example of an individual who experiences a shift in consciousness as a result of exposure to revolutionary ideas, proving that intellectual transformation is possible even for those who have internalised the ideals of the ruling class. In this perspective, Sen represents the potential for individuals to become intellectuals and agents of social change, questioning the status quo and striving towards a more just society. Sen's following speech also emphasises

how the Tuis use their intellectual power to uphold the ruling class and perpetuate the cycle of exploitation, rather than using their knowledge to challenge and change the system:

The thoughts you can buy here stink. The whole country is governed by injustice, and in the Tui Academy all you get to learn is why it has to be that way. It's true, they can build stone bridges over the widest rivers. But the powerful are carried over them into indolent luxury, while the poor are herded into slavery. It's true, they have medicine. But the few are restored to health so they can commit injustice, while the rest are made fit in order to sweat on their behalf. Opinions are bartered like fish and, thought itself has fallen into disrepute. (Brecht, 2004, p. 189)

Sen's experience of witnessing the corruption and hypocrisy of the Tuis leads him to reject their philosophy and embrace Kai Ho's revolutionary ideas, which advocate land reform and social justice. Sen's rejection of the Tui ideology is a pivotal moment in the play as it marks the beginning of his transformation into a revolutionary intellectual who aligns himself with Kai Ho's ideas of social justice and class struggle. Through his speeches, we see the contrast between the stagnant and oppressive intellectualism of the Tui community and the dynamic and liberating intellectualism of Kai Ho and his comrades. Sen proclaims the truth and exposes the lies of the Tuis. Moreover, Sen's presence is a reinterpretation of the classical definition of an intellectual who is only engaged in mental activity. As a peasant, Sen overcomes the polarity between mental and muscular labour. In other words, Brecht combines action and knowledge in Sen. By breaking down the distinction between mental and muscular labour, Sen embodies Gramsci's theory of praxis.

The failure of the Tuis to persuade the public causes the state's repressive apparatus to come into play. In the second scene, the conversations between Turandot and Nu Shan about Gogher Gogh, a bandit who wants to become a Tui, show how the Tui, the state and Gogh's gang work together as mechanisms of oppression. According to Nu Shan, there is no distinction between being a Tui and being a bandit. In both cases, the goal is to gain personal advantage while oppressing the society at the same time. As the Court Tui also puts it, there is a similarity between paying tribute to bandits to prevent them from harming people and paying taxes to avoid police repression:

Nu Shan: By his gang. You see: as long as they pay, they don't get attacked.

The Court Tui: (cynically) Just like the state. Pay your taxes, and you get no trouble from the police. (Brecht, 2004, p. 135)

As Althusser notes, the mechanisms of the state operate in two dimensions. Where the ideological apparatuses are ineffective, the repressive apparatuses come into play (2014, pp. 74-75). With the support of the emperor, Gogh, who is a foolish bandit and fails the Tui test twice, gets a stronger position than the Tuis who represent the ideology of the state. For Schmidt, the Bandit, Gogh, represents the inevitable end of Tui-dominated Weimar republicanism in the historical background (1980, pp. 293-94). Brecht claims that intellectual betrayal led the Weimar Republic to turn into a fascist regime. He believes that intellectuals of the Frankfurt School were too eager to reconcile with capitalism through their theories. Thus, the Tuis appear to be a parody of these people in the play. Gogh, on the other hand, might be seen as a parody of Hitler (Schmidt, 1980, p. 290). According to Brecht, Gogh does not constitute a significant threat because, despite his threats, he is too foolish to be a Tui and too ignorant to speak for the people. In fact, he also fails to defend the emperor and suppress the uprising. Clark argues that *Turandot* is also a criticism of intellectuals of Brecht's time as well as serving as self-criticism: "Brecht surely recognised that he, too, had become a Tui, that he, too, had whitewashed the actions of Ulbricht's regime" (2006, p. 473). The main reason behind this claim is Brecht's attitude towards the workers' uprising during the Ulbricht regime. Although he always stated that he was a supporter of the proletariat, his failure to support the workers' uprising in the German Democratic Republic in 1953 and on top of that, supporting the crackdown of the Ulbricht's regime by writing a letter are enough to raise questions about his intellectual identity:

History will pay its respects to the revolutionary impatience of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. The great discussion [exchange] with the masses about the speed of socialist construction will lead to a viewing and safeguarding of the socialist achievements. At this moment I must assure you of my allegiance to the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. (qtd. in Clark, 2006, p. 466)

As a matter of fact, Brecht penned this letter to emphasise his belief that efforts to develop contact between the masses and socialist ideology would be good for

understanding socialist achievements. On the other hand, he expresses his commitment to the regime, believing that fascist forces opposed to the socialist regime were also involved in the uprising. However, Clark notes that what the Ulbricht regime published in the newspaper was only the last paragraph of the letter in which Brecht declared his support; the publication was never approved by Brecht (2006, p. 467). Ignoring the suggestion of a debate about the mistakes committed and instead highlighting his involvement had damaged Brecht's intellectual reputation. Although Brecht's actions raised doubts about him because of the circumstances of the time, his intellectual identity did not allow him to accept anything without questioning. He ideologically supported the socialist regime but there was always a distance between him and the party. It was quite normal that he did not see the workers' uprisings only as a class conflict because he was aware of the shortcomings of the socialist regime, as well as the existence of fascistic elements that had not yet completely lost their influence and the provocations of West Germany. *Turandot* was written in the days following the workers' uprising of 1953. Thus, there are clear connections between the play and the workers' uprising. In his play, Brecht aimed to show what difficulties and injustices can arise when the great order of a socialist ideology is established too quickly and inorganically. The working class, unified and revolting under the leadership of Kai Ho, who symbolises the socialist philosophy in the play, finally overthrows the emperor. Contrary to the critiques, the idea that it is possible to change the world around us seems to be Brecht's unequivocal message in support of the working classes.

Conclusion

As a result, *Turandot* remains a strong critique of the system, but it would be far too speculative to take it as Brecht's self-criticism as suggested by Clark. In the difficult times through which Brecht lived for most of his life, he too had to make some important decisions that led some to question the intellectual that he was. However, despite the difficulties that presented themselves as he was trying to formulate a politically conscious form of theatre and the occasional setbacks, one should note that Brecht was indeed a strong-minded and stubborn intellectual who never lost his ideal of reforming the theatre of his time. By raising the consciousness of the public, he aimed to revolutionise not only the theatre as an art form but also society and ultimately the system. As he discusses both in *Galileo* and *Turandot*, the intellectuals, in whom resides the intellect and the will to rise above ideas by means of action, must be able to shoulder the full responsibility of their ideas and inventions. As an intellectual who, from birth onwards,

always bore the coldness from the black forests inside him, Brecht was a misfit in the capitalist order, an intellectual who could not accept, nor naturalise how the system exploited the working classes and therefore fought against it throughout his life by using theatre as his form of attack. There is no doubting the influence he had on theatrical and political philosophy in general, regardless of how one chooses to interpret his works. His ideas still challenge and inspire us now as he remains an important figure in the history of both art and activism. As our world continues to struggle with issues of inequality, injustice, and oppression, Brecht's works still have a strong impact today both through the theatre practitioners, philosophers, and writers he continues to inspire and as a reminder that each of us can contribute to the development of a society that is more just and equitable.

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