



Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*: Marxist Concept of Alienation

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Abstract

This paper intends to argue that *Mother Courage*, the main character of Bertolt Brecht's play, *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1980), fails to support her children financially because of a socio-psychological state defined by Marx as "alienation". *Mother Courage's* attempt to maintain and secure financial profit leads to a tragic failure because her endeavor falls into the Marxist category of alienated labor. This reading intends to offer a study of the two major aspects of "alienation"— 'alienation and identity,' and 'alienation and political,'— in selected play.

Keywords: Sense of Loss, Alienation, Identity, Estrangement, Capitalism

1. Introduction

The concept of "alienation" has a determining place in contemporary studies of human relations and sociological thought. In a sociological study, "alienation" is the sense of loss felt by an individual's consciousness when the individual is faced with an object in the context of capital's domination. Charles Taylor states that alienation has "an indefinable sense of loss; a sense that life has become impoverished, that men are somehow deracinated, that society and human nature alike have been mutilated, and above all that men have been separated from whatever might give meaning to their work and their lives."ⁱ

The concept of "alienation" is clearly demonstrated as a capitalist production which has linkage to applications particularly in the areas of personal and political issues. Personal alienation is relevant to the question of identity. Theoretically, personal alienation has symptoms that can be traced in the conduct of the individual. *Mother Courage* shows these symptoms which this study will pinpoint. As a process, personal alienation results in a crisis of identity and can lead to the individual's marginality. On the other hand, political alienation is an individual's feeling that he is not part of the political process and that his actions make no difference. Since capitalism plays an important role in the production of "alienation", Marx offers a theoretical discussion of the devastating effect of capitalist production on human beings, on their physical and mental states, and on their social processes of which they are a part. Each one of these aspects— personal, and political— will be discussed in the following.

I intend to utilize the theory of "alienation" maintained by Marx in my argument in two ways: Personal and political. With regard to personal alienation, Marx offers the symptoms which include the types of feelings that an alienated individual experiences. These are such feelings as powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, and estrangement. With regard to political alienation, Marx identifies four factors that cause "alienation." These are, according to Marx, man's relations to his product, his productive activity, other man, and the species.

In this paper, I intend to argue that *Mother Courage*, the main character of Brecht's play, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, fails to provide for her children financially because of a socio-psychological state defined by Marx as "alienation."ⁱⁱ My reading offers that *Mother Courage's* attempt to maintain and secure financial profit leads to a tragic failure because her endeavor falls into the Marxist category of alienated labor. *Mother Courage* pays a heavy price by losing all her children for profit.

2. Alienation: the Theoretical Background

In this paper, I intend to employ Marx's theoretical propositions on an individual's state of "alienation". Primarily, the concept of "alienation" applies to an individual's sensual experience, where the loss of the sense of utility and the inability to change one's conditions are at stake. One instance of a person's sensual experience under the influence of "alienation" is when that person, in this case *Mother Courage*, is subject to irrational passions such as greed. Marx sees greed both as one of the main characteristics of capitalists' qualities and the motive of most capitalist actions.ⁱⁱⁱ He asserts that "greed is a function of alienation as a result of loss of 'personal identity' due to the effects of the division of labor."^{iv} The sense of greed and the notion of consumption are directly related to each other. Erich Fromm argues that the most striking kind of "alienation" is known as the process of consumption, which leads to dehumanization.^v *Mother Courage* is dehumanized in the process of sacrificing her children for profit.

Marx also theorizes mankind's alienation in the political arena. He believes that under capitalism in a society, a worker is compelled to sell his labor and his skills to the capitalist, and the worker himself controls neither the product of his labor nor his labor itself. This leads to the laborer's sense of "alienation". Marx identifies four factors that cause "alienation." These are, according to Marx, man's relations to his product, his productive activity, other man, and the species.

First, with regard to man's relation to his product, "alienation" is caused by the separation of the worker from the product of his labor, where the worker has no control over the products he produces. Instead, products are controlled by the capitalist.

Second is "alienation" in terms of the process of production, which is concerned with the fact that the work provides no satisfaction but is only a source of physical exhaustion and mental debasement for the worker. Marx allocates a particular place to man's relationship to his activity. Thus the consciousness which man has of his activity is transformed in a way that the species life becomes a means for him, and man's consciousness is used to direct his efforts for survival.

Third, the worker is alienated from other human beings due to the dissolution of human relationships and social bonds. And finally, Marx makes the proposition that under capitalism man's nature as a species is alienated in the sense that mankind is alienated from the others.^{vi} Moreover, Marx elaborates on the feeling of "estrangement" or "alienation" which occurs due to social structures that deny human nature the chance to perform an activity in co-operation with others.

Further, he lays great emphasis on the transformation of human labor itself into a commodity which is among the major alienating forces in the capitalist world. Furthermore, the theory of "alienation" is employed by Marx to distinguish four aspects of political "alienation" encompassing an individual's experiencing lack of power, lack of meaning, the lowering of norms, and estrangement.

This paper is divided into two sections. I have tried to unpack the elements of Marx's theorizing of "alienation" to include ideology, greed, physical and mental exhaustion, and loss of the sense of utility. I will attempt to show how these are frequently strained in sociology by providing examples from *Mother Courage*. The first section, "alienation and identity," deals with the psychological effects of capitalism on Mother Courage and her attitude in a capitalist society. This section treats "alienation" as a process which involves a crisis in identity and can lead to marginality. The section also reflects on the process of consumption as an example of "alienation", and greed as the motive of most capitalist actions leading to "alienation". The section, "alienation and political," deals with the feelings of an individual who does not feel to be a part of the political process. Moreover, the politically alienated believes that his social or political actions make no difference. This section also introduces Marx's notion of the four expressions of identification that cause alienation. Marx categorizes these as man's relation to his product, his productive activity, other man, and the species. Finally the section negotiates how the four symptoms of alienation recognized by Marx as the symptoms of political alienation appear in *Mother Courage*. These symptoms include the types of feelings which an alienated individual experiences. These are such feelings as powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, and estrangement.

3. Alienation and Identity

Mother Courage is alienated because she may lose her canteen to provide the ransom to rescue Swiss Cheese. According to Weber, "alienation is the sensual experience of a subjective process of loss of sense of belonging and utility in mankind's own social environment when social ties are loosened. As a process it involves a crisis in identity and can lead to marginality."^{vii} Hence, Mankind's alienation is considered as one of the major psychological effects of capitalism. Fromm claims: "Man does not experience himself as the active bearer of his powers, but as an impoverished 'thing,' dependent on powers outside of himself, unto whom he has projected his living substance."^{viii} It means that alienation pervades the relationship of Mother Courage to her work, to the state and to herself. She establishes a way of profit to provide a way for herself and her children's consumption. This establishment of hers stands over and above her. In the enclosed space where Mother Courage does business, she becomes a subject that dances to the tune of capitalists. The capitalists, I mean those who hold power think about war as a way of maintaining control and dominance over the bodies. The soldiers determine the war which brings order. At the beginning of the play, the Sergeant says, war is "order" and the world is founded upon the order. In this sense, all the world's resources are dedicated to this order. In this context, the wealth of the village is seized by the rulers for their war, and does not remain with its producers. By means of forced transfer of property with which the authorities gain while the little people lose, the Sergeant shows what Mother Courage reveals in the third scene: "the rulers carry out war for obtaining one thing—profit." (iii. 204)

Brecht considers war as a crime. He considers Courage's participation in war a crime.^{ix} Mother Courage has an incorrigible belief that she can profit from war. Her enthusiasm for war becomes more inhuman when we take into account Brecht's view that her business with war causes her children's deaths. This picture of Courage as criminal is supported by Brecht with examples of inhumanities that reveal her affinity with the crime in which she participates. And each inhumanity is usually connected in some way with her business, which reinforces the idea that her business with war is a crime. Courage is responsible for Swiss Cheese's death when she hesitates to ransom him. The deaths of her children may appear only further examples of the inhuman results of Courage's involvement in war. As Brecht so often tells us, the children's deaths are the evidence that the little people cannot profit, but only lose from war. *Mutter Courage* seems as a war for the rulers' gain, which the little people like Mother Courage is motivated by a desperate self-interest, even though she ultimately pays the price both in defeat and in victory. Nevertheless, Brecht posits a sort of equivalence between war and capitalism, and by his own suggestion that the "business" of *Mutter Courage*

ultimately refers to capitalism. He describes capitalism as a social system that both gives a rise to war and needs war. These statements show that Brecht's portrayal of the Thirty Years War is a portrayal of capitalism.^x

The portrayal of the war of the great against the small emphasizes the action of the great, that is, the fundamental exercise of power by the rulers over the ruled which is known as exploitation. Throughout the play there are many examples of the presence of exploitation in this capitalist society. As we have seen, the sergeant of scene one, when he talks of carrying off the peasants' goods, depicts no equitable exchange between producers, but instead a seizure or theft of products in the name of the ruling class. Other representations of exploitation can be found in scene two we see that the Swedish King taxes peasants in order to pay for his war; in scene three the army demolishes peasants' crops— which is no less an appropriation; in scene eight peasants are about to lose their home to war taxes; in scene twelve the army is ready to induce compliance from the peasants by consuming— that is, slaughtering their livestock. In so doing, Brecht alludes to exploitation when he declares to us that the little people do not gain from their rulers' wars. That is, whatever the outcome of war, neither worker nor soldier, as victims of exploitation, benefit from their labors in the interests of their rulers. In the third scene when a soldier following orders tries to rescue the regimental cannon, Courage impresses upon him how little he will gain by it. In other words, Mother Courage does not encourage heroic acts but dissuades the masses from this virtue. Meanwhile, she tells the soldiers to abandon the regimental cannon, urges Swiss Cheese to throw away the regimental cashbox. At the other occasion, Mother Courage warns Eilif that his heroic deeds accomplish nothing except his death, just the same reveals in scene one that the glory of war is only death. While Eilif is praised by his officer for his heroism, Courage only celebrates the foolhardiness of her son by slapping on his ears.

For Brecht capitalism is an inhuman and oppressive system in which a privileged group keeps the majority, I mean, the workers, by means of force, economic compulsion, and ideological restraint in a deadly dependence on their exploiters. Since the capitalists own the means to life. The capitalists, driven by profit, exploit the workers. By the same token, Brecht elaborates that capitalism maintains itself through the ruin of labor, caused not only by exploitation, but also by a labor process that alienates and dehumanizes the bodies. Hence, I refer not only to Brecht's criticism of capitalism as an inhuman, exploitative system but also to his view that capitalism is a warring society and so a cause of war. Brecht lays great emphasis on their interdependence of war and capitalism. Brecht doubly curses Mother Courage. Not only does Mother Courage support the crime of war due to her business which involves her in the war but also her view that she can profit from the war of the powerful which results in perishing her children. Courage is an accomplice of war, her part in the war is deliberate and persistent. In this respect, Brecht discusses that Courage must know the misery war causes, its violence and starvation. She must know that war is a business waged by rulers for profit only. Courage must know then that her attempt to identify with the rulers, her hope to profit as they do from war is doomed.^{xi}

The authorities also find their benefits in the progression of war. In this respect, Mother Courage also as a capitalist praises the continuation of war in order to gain more profit. In the sixth scene, there is a dialogue about the duration of the war, with Mother Courage anxiously raising the question of how long war will last. If it is to continue, she can comfortably invest in new goods for the cart. If it will finish soon, she cannot risk investing for fear of being left with goods that cannot be sold. Then the Chaplain says that the war will continue:

Mother Courage: (Returning with Katrin.) Don't be silly, war'll go on a bit longer, and we'll make a bit more money. That's war for you. Nice way to get a living! (vi. 261-262)

Perhaps most striking kind of alienation is what Fromm has to mention about the process of consumption. Brecht draws attention to the debasement of subjects through their ways of consumption. In capitalism, he says, the masses are dehumanized. In *Mutter Courage*, Brecht refers to this dehumanization through his metaphor for the reduction of a worker to a thing— commodity— in capitalism. Since everything in capitalism is calculated according to profitability, Max Weber expresses that everything becomes reduced to a money value. Brecht says that the masses in capitalism become crippled, and emptied of their content.^{xii} Thus in a capitalistic society, by earning profit men acquire things to consume; but such is our dehumanized state that it is we who are consumed.^{xiii} That is, each time Mother Courage leaves a child alone to make money she loses that child to the war in the quest for profit. The deaths of Courage's children are not only the result of their mother bringing them to war but also the act of Courage's sacrifice of her children to war, that is, to herself who consumes life in order to bring it forth again. And Courage's absence on the business that perpetuates the conditions which kill them is seen as part of the ritual of their sacrifice. She seems more concerned with matters belonging to finance. In this sense Paul E. Farmer claims:

Brecht's Mother Courage was a woman caught up in the economy of the war— selling food, and just about anything in the mad optimistic belief that “war feeds its people better.” But war is a machine that devours its young. Brecht wants to give a moral lesson that conducting business during a war leads to destitution specifically for little people like Mother Courage.^{xiv}

Given the choice between her child and profit— between protecting her children and business with war and death— Courage chooses death. Her choice is echoed when Eilif is taken to his execution. When death as war exacts its final payment from Eilif, Courage is again absent. At his moment of need when Eilif's last wish is to see his mother, she is away at town selling off her stock. Courage's way of consumption results in the fact that she is never satisfied. She seems worried about the prices that have fallen dramatically and pays no heed to the values like her son, Eilif. In the eighth scene, she misses the opportunity to see Eilif for the last time because she gives priority to her profit than to her son.

Mother Courage (to Yvette): Come along, got to get rid of my stuff afore prices start dropping... (Calls into the cart.) Katrin, church is off. I'm going to market instead. When Eilif turns up, one of you give him a drink. (viii.228-232)

Mother Courage thus develops an ever-increasing need for more things, for more consumption. The constant increase of needs forces her to an ever increasing effort and it makes her dependent on those needs and on the people on top and institutions by whose help she attains them. At the beginning of the play, her attitude of excessive desire for wealth is being revealed. She is obsessed with business and profit by taking a deadly risk to drive the cart right through the bombardment to sell fifty loaves of bread. In a terrible place through bombardment she hopes to reap her reward. Mother Courage as a sutler lives from war and feeds its engines. Just in case, she earns the epithet "hyena of the battlefield."

Mother Courage (to the Sergeant): Courage is the name they gave me because I was scared of going broke, so I drove me cart right through bombardment of Riga with fifty loaves of bread. (i.72-73)

Her criminality destroys her children for the sake of her business. For, the hyena is already present with Courage's first appearance, in her business song. We have already seen the inhumanity revealed by this song, when Courage's apparent concern for the needs of the soldiers turns out to be a concern for them only while they remain customers, after which she consigns them to the pit.

Mother Courage: Captains, how can you make them face it— marching to death without a brew?

Courage has rum with which to lace it and boil their souls and bodies through.

Their musket primed, their stomach hollow— Captains, your men don't look so well.

So feed them up and let them follow while you command them into hell. (i.51-58)

The central issue of the effects of capitalism on personality is the phenomenon of alienation. The person does not experience himself as the center of his world, as the creator of his own acts— but his acts and their consequences become his masters whom he obeys.^{xv} In the third scene while Swiss Cheese' life is at risk, Mother Courage decides to pawn the wagon and reclaim it with the money from the cash box. She ponders that she may get Swiss Cheese back. Her delay results in the death of her son because she haggles for too long over the ransom. In this sense she is not the center of her own acts, but her acts and their results become her master. The Sergeant brings the corpse for identification if anyone knows him, but Mother Courage shakes her head to show that she does not know Swiss Cheese.

Sergeant: Here's somebody we dunno the name of. It's got to be listed, though, so everything's shipshape. He had a meal here. Have a look, see if you know him. (*He removes the sheet.*) Know him? (*Mother Courage shakes her head.*) What never see him before he had that meal here? (*Mother Courage shakes her head.*) (iii.670-675)

We can speak of alienation not only in relationship to other people, but also in relationship to oneself, when the person is subject to irrational passions. The person who is given to the exclusive pursuit of his passion for money is possessed by his striving for it. Courage's inhumanity, I mean her passion for money, asserts itself when she bargains for her son and wastes precious time trying to lower his price. In the end Courage agrees to the full amount, but it is too late; her real choice was made when she first refused to sell the wagon and so reduced her son's value. In the play, Mother Courage eventually loses control of the situation and is unable to resolve her financial-family dilemma. She strives for keeping money for herself as much as she can. She says:

Mother Courage: How'm I to payback two-hundred then? I just need a moment to think, it's bit sudden, what'm I to do, two hundred's too much for me. (iii. 650-652)

Thus, Marx observes greed as one of the main characteristics of capitalists' qualities. In Marx, greed is the motive of most capitalist actions.^{xvi} The sense of greed is concrete when Mother Courage refuses to give a soldier a drink because he cannot pay. Her refusal highlights her sense of greed as a capitalist and her thirst for financial gain.

Mother Courage says: Can't pay that it? No money, no schnapps (v.4).

Brecht utters that "Mother Courage is a profiteer who sacrifices her children to her commercial interests and cannot learn from her experience."^{xvii} She declares that war is a good provider by confessing "war gives its people a better deal (viii. 346)." Peter Demetz writes: "Brecht tried to point out Mother Courage's greed and her commercial participation in the murderous war."^{xviii} Her greed is concrete when she haggles over the bribe needed to free the captured Swiss Cheese, and the delay results in the execution of her son. Since she cannot make any changes, she is defined as alienated. Indeed her greed leads her to alienation. Pursuant to Marxist teachings, "Man has to be made aware of his state of alienation in order to be able to change his conditions."^{xix} Nevertheless, her unawareness is reflected when she predicts that the death will come to each of her children.

Mother Courage: (taking out a sheet of parchment and tearing it up). Eilif, Swiss Cheese, Katrin, may all of us be torn apart like this if we let ourselves get too mixed up in the war! Watch! Black is for death, so I'm putting a big black cross on this slip of paper. (i.215-218)

The Sergeant and each of her children draw lots to see what awaits them in war, they all draw death. It is true that Courage prearranges this result, to distract the soldiers from recruiting her sons and to dissuade her children from getting too close to war. Yet the fraud is true. Mother Courage mentions the same fact elsewhere. She compares the recruiter's invitation to her son with the "angler's to the worm; getting to close to war, she says, is like lambs going to

slaughter (i.182);” a song which she seems to have taught her son tells us that a soldier's only reward is death; she does not call the soldiers' march into battle a road to glory, instead “she calls it a march into the maw of hell (iii.99-101).”

In relation to the discussion about individual alienation, I think of alienation as process which involves a crisis in identity and can lead to marginality. It functions as a devastating effect of capitalistic production on human beings, basically on their social processes of which they are a part. Now, it seems appropriate to begin with the topic of political alienation which has direct effect on the identity of the self in the political and social processes. Marx develops a theory of how human beings are shaped by the society they lived in, and how they can act to change that society. I propose that alienation is the state of being segregated from one's community. So, this type of alienation may lead to lack of engagement in the political system. In this respect, political alienation has relevance with individual alienation since the subject is no longer identifying with any particular political party, and may result in abstention and apathy towards political process.

4. Alienation and Politics

Political alienation comes to function as a term signifying almost any form of ‘unhappiness’ about politics or dissatisfaction with some aspect of society. In this sense, a politically alienated subject is also isolated in the social system. “Alienation” shows how mankind sinks to the level of a commodity, and indeed the most wretched of all commodities, since the harder he labors and the more he produces the more miserable he becomes. From this premise, the more mankind exerts himself the more powerful becomes the world of things which he creates and which confront him as alien objects. The greater the mankind's activity, the more pointless his life becomes.

The theory of alienation is the intellectual construct in which Marx displays the devastating effect of capitalist production on human beings, on their physical and mental states, and on their social processes of which they are a part. Marx claims that one of the manifestations of alienation is that “all is under the sway of inhuman power.” It means that in capitalist society, the power of capital reflects the power of the alien force which rules the powerless subjects. Thus, capitalism is an exploitative system that causes and requires war. In a text from *Couragemodell* Brecht suggests that the ‘business’ of Mother Courage and capitalism are the same. In Brecht's terms:

The war is the business of the big men who manipulate politics for their own advantage, exploiting mankind, making man's relationship with man primarily a business relationship.^{xx}

In so doing, Mother Courage as an alienated has no chance to compete with the authorities. Not only does the alienated subject, Mother Courage sell her power to the master of capital but also the ‘sway of inhuman power’ threatens the livelihood of her and her children. In capitalism, the alienated subjects are dehumanized. This dehumanization refers to the reduction of the subject to a thing or in Marxian term, commodity because everything in capitalism is calculated according to profitability. Now it seems appropriate to point to Courage's inhuman unconcern for the slaughtered peasants, and to her business interests as far as her children's labor and Swiss Cheese's ransom are concerned. Mother Courage is only motivated by profit. In the scene nine, her decision to remain with Kattrin is not only motivated by maternal love, but also by a hope for profit in war:

The Cook: Last word. Think it over.

Mother Courage: I've nowt to think. I'm not leaving her here. (ix. 162-163)

Being aware of the privations suffered in war, the Cook decides to offer a partnership to Courage. Utrecht seems to stand outside the turmoil of war. Certainly Courage understands it as an escape from war. But Courage rejects Utrecht because her favor of war. As a merchant, she depends upon war for her profit.

According to Marx, “alienation as the product of capitalism refers to the situation of modern man, deprived of, robbed of, or alienated from the totality of human nature which should be his.”^{xxi} He believes that under capitalism in a society, a worker is compelled to sell his strength and his skills to the capitalist. The play unfolds Mother Courage as a victim of the capitalist way of life, in which war is a way of doing business. Even after losing all her children, she still attempts to carry on with her business. The play, *Mother Courage*, attempts to show how capitalism brutalizes Mother Courage herself. Her business with war causes her children's deaths. Inhumanity is revealed in her affinity with participation in the war. The play gives a picture of Courage's inhumanity which is integral to her business. I mean, Courage's business is bound up with the misery of others. In fact, the idea that one's happiness is purchased at the price of the unhappiness of another is clearly part of Courage's thinking. In a capitalist society because mankind's ability is calculated according to his or her amount of profit, so everyone becomes a competitor. Individuals become isolated monads, concerned only for themselves and without regard for others. All these following examples reveal the fact that Courage shows that her desire for profit knows no compassion. In the play, Mother Courage's business is mingled with the misery of others. Her preference for war over peace, death over life, extends even to her own children. In scene two, Courage exploits the general starvation at the siege of Walhoff to extort from the cook an inflated price for her capon:

The Cook: Sixty hellers for a miserable bird like that?

Mother Courage: Miserable bird? This fat brute? Mean to say some greedy old general— and watch your step if you got nowt for his dinner— can't afford sixty hellers for him?

... Mother Courage: What, a capon like this you can get just down the road?

... A rat you might get.... Fifty hellers for a giant capon in time of siege! (ii. 1-4, 6-7, 11-12)

At the end of the second scene, those who live in Halle know that the town is in danger and so they try to sell off their possessions before they flee. Courage exploits their fear and desperation to purchase the goods cheaply. Courage tries to profit from the misfortune of others. When Courage wants to mortgage her wagon for her son's life, she preys on the fears of Yvette, the camp prostitute. Yvette attempts to hide her fear by checking her cart or counting the shirts:

Mother Courage: Yvette, it's no time for checking your cart.... You promised you'd talk to sergeant about Swiss Cheese, there ain't a minute to lose....

Yvette: Just let me count the shirts.

Mother Courage: (*Pulling her down by the skirt.*)... For God's sake, pretend it's your friend. (iii. 573-575, 577-578, 580)

Hence, Marx identifies four expressions of identification that cause alienation. These are man's relations to his product, his productive activity, other man and the species.^{xxii} By the same token, these propositions mentioned by Marx have relevance to the position of Mother Courage as an alienated woman. Mother Courage's alienation is the result of following factors.

In his essay *1814*, Marx discusses that under the system of capitalism the worker is alienated from the product of his labor and from the means of production— both of which has become things not belonging to him.^{xxiii} Thus the worker separated from his work and from his product, is alienated from himself since his labor is no longer his own but the property of another. In so doing, by man's relations to his product, I mean Courage's activity mortifies her soul and devours her children, in the sense that Mother Courage's canteen exercises power over her, and makes her dependent and vulnerable. It appears true that Mother Courage at first intends to sell her canteen to ransom Swiss Cheese's life. But later on, not only does she mean to sell the canteen but also to mortgage it. She is dependent on the function of her canteen, because her state of business may go at risk by losing it. That is, Courage intends to utilize Yvette's money to rescue Swiss Cheese and then to use the money from the cashbox to recover her wagon. At any rate, she does not want to lose her canteen. It seems more valuable than her son's life. While at the end of the play she takes up and hauls the damaged canteen which is almost empty. I think this image of emptiness of canteen reflects her state of alienation.

By man's relation to his productive activity, it fosters the impression of Mother Courage who has been exploited due to 'the means of production.'^{xxiv} Because, capitalism maintains the means of production through the ruin of labor by a labor process that dehumanizes and alienates Mother Courage. Throughout the play, she does not extract surplus labor because she is considered as a poor candidate to represent her business in the capitalist system. That is, she is in danger of being impoverished because of the smallness of her capital.^{xxv} To put it differently, the capitalists steal the subject's labor to reap the profits. While, we see that little people like Courage is forced to accommodate because of the danger and deprivation she may endure in such a disordered ruled land.

Mankind is alienated from other men because his chief link with them is the commodities they exchange or produce. The transformation of human labor into a commodity is among the major alienating forces in the capitalist world. By alienation to other man, I intend to say that Mother Courage is isolated from other human beings and feels indifferent to others. It connotes to an individual feeling or state of dissociation from self, and from others. F.H. Heinemann suggests that alienation objectively refers to different kinds of dissociation, break or rupture between human beings and their surroundings.^{xxvi} For instance, when the Chaplain needs some linen to bandage some peasants whose farmhouse has been demolished, Mother Courage's daughter Katrin wants to provide him with some shirts from the wagon, but Mother Courage refuses to give up those clothes, declaring that the peasants are unable to purchase. At last, The Chaplain forcefully takes four of her officer's shirts, tearing them into strips to use as bandages:

Mother Courage: I got none. All my bandages were sold to regiment. I ain't tearing up my officer's shirts for that lot.

The Chaplain: I need linen, I tell you.

Mother Courage: (*Blocking Katrin's way into the cart by sitting on the step.*) I'm giving nowt. They'll never pay, and why, nowt to pay with. (v.11-16)

Lastly, in treating species alienation, Marx gives a favored place to man's relation to his activity. For Marx, species is the category of those potentialities which mark man off from other living creatures.^{xxvii} Necessarily, mankind is restricted in his or her use of objects to what their owners will allow, which is less than his or her powers require. In species alienation, 'activity' is the chief means through which the individual expresses and develops his powers, and is distinguished from other's activity by its range, adaptability, skill and intensity.^{xxviii} Courage as a capitalist has something in common with the rulers which admits her higher state of position in comparison to the other little people. She oppresses and exploits others. For example, we have seen that she converts her children into draft animals to pull the canteen. I mean, her children contribute their labor to Courage's work, much as the soldiers contribute their labor to the project of their rulers. But In capitalism, however, the worker's labor "turns for him the life of the species into a means of individual life"^{xxix} Work has become a means to stay alive rather than life being an opportunity to do work. It asserts that man's existence has become the purpose of work. In the play, Courage's aim is used to direct her efforts at staying alive, if she wants to be successful in her business. In the third scene, Mother Courage and Swiss Cheese ignore knowing each other. Although, Courage loses her son but she saves her life to continue her business and also her daughter, Katrin.

Political alienation is the feeling of an individual that he is not a part of the political process. The politically alienated believes that his social or political actions make no difference. Marx discusses the types of feelings which are the symptoms of alienation. These are powerlessness or a feeling that one cannot influence the social situations in which one interacts. Further, there is meaninglessness or a belief that an individual has no guide for conduct. The next is normlessness or an individual's feeling that illegitimate means are required to achieve important goals. And lastly, there is estrangement or a feeling that one cannot find self-rewarding activities in life.^{xxx}

Modern conditions of work under capitalism are alienating largely because the individual worker loses— or is unable to gain— control over his social machines.^{xxxii} Firstly, political powerlessness is the feeling of an individual that his political action has no influence in determining the course of events. Those who feel politically powerless do not believe that any action they may perform can determine the outcome they desire. This feeling of powerlessness arises from and contributes to the belief that the community is not controlled by the mass, but rather by a small number of powerful and influential persons who are in charge to control.^{xxxiii} In the play it denotes that the rulers pay no heed to peasants' deficiencies so that to change their conditions. Courage's state of powerlessness reveals in another scene when she appears outside an officer's tent, complaining to a Clerk that the army has destroyed her merchandise and charged her with an illicit fine. She plans to file a complaint with the captain. The Clerk responds that she ought to be grateful the soldiers let her stay in business:

The Clerk (to Mother Courage): Better shut up. We're short of canteen, so we let you go on trading (iv. 9-10).

Mother Courage's state of powerlessness is revealed again within the play. James K. Lyon in his "Brecht Unbound" declares that Brecht's Marxist views caused him to look at Mother Courage as an alienated and powerless woman.^{xxxiii} Mother Courage is manifested as powerless in the sense that she cannot make any difference. She becomes astonished to hear her son's voice again, but she is powerless to take Eilif away from The General. Mother Courage says:

Mother Courage: My eldest boy Eilif. It's two years, since I lost sight of him. They (the soldiers) pinched him from me on the road (ii.64-65).

Workers are dehumanized not only by the work situation but also by the ends for which our society uses work, chiefly consumption for its own sake. A condition that leads to isolation resulting from capitalism that makes the individual even more lonely and alienated; while, intensifying his feelings of insignificance and powerlessness.^{xxxiv} In this respect, Mother Courage feels powerless and insignificant due to her state of alienation. In the first scene, Courage is powerless because her actions have no influence or control over the events. For example, she is unable to stop the army from taking her sons Eilif and Swiss Cheese away. She is desperate in the face of the political conditions surrounding her and her children.

The state of political meaninglessness is revealed when political decisions seem unpredictable through Courage's perception. Mother Courage has a kind of perception of war that she may both reap the profit and nourish her children. She does not think that her participation results in perishing her children. She does not understand the deep meaning of the Sergeant's comment: "Like the war to nourish you? Have to feed it something too (i.332-333)." She prophesies truly that those who come to war will be perished. She warns that getting too close to war means destruction. Nevertheless, she keeps on doing business. For at the end, just as she did after losing Eilif to the army, after losing Swiss Cheese to the firing squad, and after losing Kattrin to the Imperialists, she continues her struggle; though her business is a mere shadow of its former self, though she is surrounded by the devastation of a war seemingly without end. She does not have such a perception that she will lose all her children under the inhuman system of the ruler which exploits Courage by raising her children to be its sacrifices.

Not only does Courage have no guide for conduct, but also she makes criticism of bad leadership. The feeling of meaninglessness is tangible when in scene four a young soldier complains of hunger. Courage points out that his suffering is a result of bad leadership. She implies that hunger becomes great. Courage's criticism of the rulers, her exposure of them as the cause of the little people's suffering is bold, but her truly dangerous aspect appears when she suggests that no improvement will come from those in power:

Young Soldier: He's (The general) whoring away my reward and I'm hungry. I'll do him.

Mother Courage: Oh I see, you're hungry. Last year that general of yours ordered you all off roads and across fields so corn should be trampled flat; I could've got ten florins for a pair of boots s'pose anyone'd been able to pay ten florins. Thought he'd be well away from that area this year, he did, but here he is, still there, and hunger is great. I see what you are angry about (iv.46-54).

Feelings of political alienation may also be experienced in the sense of the lowering of an individual's political ethics or what is called as normlessness. This occurs when standards of political behavior are violated in order to achieve some goal. This is likely to occur when the political structure prevents the attainment of political objectives through institutionally prescribed means.^{xxxv} Normlessness is defined as no longer the lack of identified viable social norms, but the result of circumstances relating to the "complexity and conflict in which individuals become unclear about the composition and enforcement of social norms. Sudden and abrupt changes occur in life conditions, and the norms that usually operate may no longer seem adequate as guidelines for conduct."^{xxxvi} Courage points out that the rulers— among whom she includes the popes— do not carry out this war for the faith, but for profit. In scene eight, when the Chaplain rebukes Courage as a hyena of the battlefield who lives from war, Courage mentions that he too lives from her business— and so from war (which the Chaplain is considered as the rulers' ideologue, because he is a pope). When she bargains for Swiss Cheese's life she barks at the chaplain who remains silent. So the Chaplain, whose function as a pope

must be to conduct the behaviors of individuals, seems unsuitable as a guideline for conduct. Courage declares that religious leaders are among those whom are bad for the health of the little people. In the third scene, she dismisses Yvette to make the deal with the generals and save her son, Swiss Cheese, while the Chaplain haggles on the amount of the money:

The Chaplain: It doesn't have to be the whole two hundred either, I'd go up to a hundred and fifty, that may be enough.

Mother Courage: Since when has it been your money? You kindly keep out of this. You'll get your hotpot all right, don't worry. Hurry up and don't haggle, it's life or death. (*Pushes Yvette off.*) (iii.584-589)

Marx considers estrangement to be the end result and thus the heart of political alienation.^{xxxvii} From personal alienation's perspective: alienated individual may feel disconnected from himself. In such cases, Mankind may not be able to find activities that are interesting to him. In the play despite Courage's endurance to gain profit from the war, it seems that she is not happy with her business anymore. I can say that Courage not only affirms her world but also negates or criticizes it. This is because the restraints and restrictions imposed by the authority. The elements of Courage's revolt represent the oppressed of patriarchal capitalism that is— the women like Mother Courage herself, and the little people. Her feminist rebellion opposes a patriarchy, a system of violence and domination that would rob Courage of both her freedom and her goods. She is represented as an oppressed woman pressed hard by the patriarchal society. Church, religion, and paternity are determined as the patriarchal authority. In doing so, her rebellions all imply an attack on authority to offer freedom instead of renunciation. In scene four, I think the subversive message of Courage is embedded in the song of the Grand Capitulation.^{xxxviii}

From political alienation's perspective: estrangement from political activity refers to an individual's rejection of the political system. *Mutter Courage* fosters the impression of a division into two opposed groups, the great and the small, the powerful and the powerless; with the great represented here by the military, and the little people by the peasants (supplemented by the soldiers and Courage's family.) she finds that the rulers do not carry out this war for the faith, but for profit. The rulers maintain a hold over the little people. Mother Courage believes that it is the little people who suffer in the war. In this sense, authority is right to perceive a threat in Courage, since she exposes the true purposes of the rulers to the little people. Courage rejects the political system which takes the bodies' health at risk to reap the profit for itself. Put it more succinctly, Courage dismisses the justice of authority that the little people instead of waiting for political system which restrains them to whether give them satisfaction or not, should take their fate into their own hands.^{xxxix}

5. Conclusion

This paper has tried to analyze the main character of the play, Mother Courage, under the devastating effects of alienation as the capitalist production both in 'alienation and identity' which deals with the sensual experience of a subjective process of loss of sense of belonging and utility in mankind's own social environment as a consequence of living in a capitalist society, and in a larger zone, 'alienation and political,' mankind sinks to the level of a wretched commodity, since the harder Courage labors and the more she produces the more miserable she becomes. From 'personal alienation,' she does not experience herself as the active bearer of her power, but as an impoverished commodity. She maintains a way of profit to provide a way for herself and her children's consumption. Courage's way of consumption results in the fact that she is never satisfied. Her belief in war so that she can get a share as much as the rulers, becomes more inhuman when her business with war causes her children's deaths and her exploitation. Her exploitation drives from her dependence on rulers by whose help she attains more consumption. From 'political alienation,' Mother Courage is shown as a politically alienated since the harder she works throughout the play to earn money, the more miserable and wretched she becomes in the end. She is politically alienated and has no chance to compete with the authorities. Courage sells her power to the master of capital which threatens the livelihood of her and her children. Capitalism brutalizes Mother Courage herself and even makes her greedy to gain profit for more consumptions. As a result, she loses all her children in the quest of her profit.

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Notes

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- ^{iv} Gary Tedman, *Aesthetics & Alienation*, (London: Zero books, 1988) 97.
- ^v Erich Fromm. *Marx's Concept of Man*, (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1961) 73.
- ^{vi} For more discussion, see also Ranjana Subberwal, *Dictionary of Sociology*, (Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill, 2009) 9-12.
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- ^{viii} Viktor Zander, 26.
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- ^x Peter Thomson. *Brecht: Mother Courage and Her Children*, (London: Cambridge UP, 1997) 37.
- ^{xi} Carol Martin, Henry Bial. *Brecht Sourcebook*, (New York: Routledge, 2000) 51.
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- ^{xiii} Erich Fromm. *Marx's Concept of Man*, 74.
- ^{xiv} Paul E. Farmer, *Mother Courage and the future of war*, Proquest Central, 2008, 178.
- ^{xv} Erich Fromm. *Marx's Concept of Man*, 56.
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- ^{xvii} David Richard Jones, *Great Directors at work* (London: University of California Press, 1986) 120.
- ^{xviii} Stratos E. Constantinidis, *Text & Presentation*, (London: McFarland & Company, 2008) 187.
- ^{xix} Stratos E. Constantinidis, 185.
- ^{xx} Harold Bloom. *Berthold Brecht*, (London: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002) 39.
- ^{xxi} Ronald Gray. *Brecht*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961) 43.
- ^{xxii} Ranjana Subberwal, 12.
- ^{xxiii} Nicholas Churchich. *Marxism and Alienation*, (London: Associated university presses, 1990) 83.
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- ^{xxix} Meg Mumford, *Bertolt Brecht*, (London: Routledge, 2009) 68.
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- ^{xxxi} Sean P. Hier, *Contemporary Sociological Thought: Themes and Theories*, 71.
- ^{xxxii} Murray L. Levin, *The Alienated Voter*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960) 65.
- ^{xxxiii} John Willett. *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht: A Study from Eight Aspects*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1967) 134. See also J. L. Styan. *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice: Volume 3, Expressionism and Epic Theatre*.
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