

## **The Aesthetic Effect: A Search for Common Grounds Between Brecht and Lukacs**

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What has become known variously as the "realism debate," the "expressionism debate" and the "Brecht-Lukacs literary debate" originated during the 1930s and is still very much alive today. Though the debate has benefited from the participation of some non-Marxists, it has been primarily a broad discussion of disagreements among Marxist artists and theorists about the values and characteristics of classical, bourgeois and socialist art.<sup>1</sup> Bertolt Brecht and Georg Lukacs, who eventually emerged as the major figures of the debate and the rallying points for others, strongly disagreed initially on the question of the aesthetic effect. Lukacs appeared to continue the tradition of the largely affective critical approaches of Aristotle, Lessing, Kant and Hegel, while Brecht, who came to Marxism shortly before the debate started and was just then in the midst of developing his theory of alienation, summarily rejected any emotion-based aesthetic. From today's perspective, with the life-work of both Brecht and Lukacs completed, it is possible to make an analysis that shows where the two leading Marxist aestheticians differ, where they augment each other and just how strong their affinity is. Such an analysis can also illuminate Brecht's widely accepted but unexamined claim to anti-Aristotelianism.

### **Emotion and Empathy--the Origins of Brecht's Alienation Effect**

Brecht's negative reaction to the dominant theories of his time suggests that he perceives them to be more uniform than they are. He calls all

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theories prior to his own "Aristotlean" and all theatre before him "dramatic," as if identical. His generalized negative reaction suggests that he has read existing theoretical works only superficially and that he blames them for stimulating the practices of the bourgeois theatre, manifested in its melodramas with their pandering of the emotions of fear, hate and anger; its sentimental dramas with their tears, teary smiles and demand for empathy; and its operas and serious dramas with their reinforcement of the notion of "eternal" and "unalterable" human nature. He finds the "Aristotlean" play "essentially static," showing the world only "as it is,"<sup>2</sup> and the "dramatic theatre" hopelessly mired in emotions which enslave the spectator's mind. Those few artists whom he sees as partly or significantly different from this include G.B. Shaw, Wedekind, Kaiser, some other expressionists and Piscator and his political theatre.

Although Brecht's earliest plays (*Baal*, *Drums In the Night*, etc.) are not radically different from the kind of theatre he criticizes, he begins thinking about the idea of the epic theatre very early in his career, sometime before his exposure to Marx's writings. In a 1926 interview with Walter Benjamin,<sup>3</sup> he already identifies "empathy" as the emotion the theatre must be rid of and discusses his epic theatre as the concept that will bring "reason" to dominance on the stage. He believes that in the theatre (and in other arts) it is the Aristotlean sense of "imitation" that is responsible for strong emotional (empathic) identification between characters and audiences. In this kind of theatre the audience is not a "number of individuals," but a "collective individual, a mob, which must and can be reached only through emotions."<sup>4</sup>

Brecht's knowledge of the *Poetics* appears to be hearsay. Consequently, he is often unfair to Aristotle. He thinks Aristotle invented the three unities and seems to believe that Horace's *Ars Poetica* is very close to Aristotle's text. He blames Aristotle for allegedly recommending the stimulation of tears with tears and "conquering the reader's breast," which Horace gives as advice to would-be playwrights.<sup>5</sup> He rightly calls "barbaric" certain recommendations of Cicero and Horace for the elicitation of tears in actors and audiences, but he wrongly associates the origin of such practices with Aristotle. Still, despite his questionable and overly generalized reading of Aristotle's theory, Brecht is accurate in his observation that the western theatre he most often witnessed, is heavily influenced by the ideals of Aristotle and Greek tragedy and it is a theatre of "imitation," "catharsis" and "universal" characters and truths. So the "dramatic theatre's" spectator when he says, "Just like me--It's only natural--It'll never change," speaks in this spirit of "universality;" when he says, "That is great art; it all seems the most obvious thing in the world," he expresses his appreciation of the perfect "imitation" of reality as he knows it; and when he exclaims, "I weep when they weep," he becomes a helpless victim of empathy (*Einfühlung*) and "catharsis."<sup>6</sup>

Brecht asserts that those among his contemporaries whom he sees as heirs to Aristotlean criticism "discredit learning by presenting it as not

enjoyable." They want to put the "enjoyable" into a category entirely separate from "learning" and argue that "emotions, instincts, impulses are generally . . . deeper, more eternal . . . than ideas."<sup>7</sup> But Brecht disagrees, saying that emotions are "not common to all humanity," not unalterable, instincts are not infallible and impulses are not uncontrollable. Those who believe they are, make a sharp distinction between entertainment and instruction. They distrust reason and hold that only emotions are compatible with entertainment in the arts. Opposing this view diametrically to the last few years of his life, Brecht believes that reason and learning, not emotions, are truly compatible with entertainment in the theatre.

To remedy the situation, Brecht proposes his concept of the epic theatre. The part of that concept which is designed specifically to break the stranglehold of emotions on theatre audiences is the device of the "alienation effect" (*Verfremdungseffekt*). The V-effect, because it is applicable to playwriting, acting and all other aspects of theatre production, has become known at once as the most essential and the most easily demonstrable characteristic of the epic theatre. Dominating though its presence may be in an epic theatre production, the V-effect is not meant to be part of the aesthetic effect itself. It is a device used to ensure a certain kind of aesthetic effect. It is a means, not an end.

The idea of the alienation effect entered Brecht's mind long before he gave it a specific name. In 1920 he wrote this in his diary: "Once I get my hooks on a theatre I shall hire 2 clowns. They will perform in the interval and pretend to be spectators. They will bandy opinions about the play and about the members of the audience. Make bets on the outcome."<sup>8</sup> While this kind of device has its origins in the ancient Greek festivals and the *commedia del l'arte*, it is quite a contrast to the opera and dramatic theatres of young Brecht's days. The idea indicates Brecht's search for interesting (entertaining) intellectual stimulation in the theatre.

According to Willett, the term "alienation effect" was taken by Brecht from Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky's "*Priem Ostranneniya*," which literally means "a device for making strange."<sup>9</sup> Brecht visited Moscow during the early 1930s and saw a performance of the Chinese Mei Lan-fang's company. The term entered his aesthetic vocabulary after this, when he wrote "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting." Shklovsky's term, however, which he discusses in his 1917 book *Iskusstvo kak priyom (Art as Technique)*, seems to have a connotation close to "distancing," different from Brecht's *Verfremdung* which means making the familiar look strange. In Brecht's practice alienation amounts to providing the audience new ways to look at old things.

In some sense Shklovsky wants what Brecht wants: to increase the length of perception and to make objects unfamiliar. Shklovsky also wants, however, to make perception more difficult, because for him the "process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself."<sup>10</sup> Brecht does not share this objective. He wants to eliminate difficulties, not to create them. The difficulties to perception are

created by blind empathic bonds between the art work and the spectator. He tries to use the V-effect as a "barrier to empathy." A representation which alienates in this way, Brecht says, "allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar."<sup>11</sup> It is crucially important to note here that Brecht wants to keep the subject *recognizable*. In Shklovsky's sense and in the majority of "modernist" art works, the defamiliarization (the estrangement from reality) is so drastic that the subject is unrecognizably hidden or distorted.

Brecht's use of alienation is also different from what he calls "old V-effects," which "remove the object represented from the spectator's grasp."<sup>12</sup> The new alienation effects, he says, are not quite so radical. In fact, they are designed to achieve the opposite goal: to allow us to grasp socially conditioned phenomena by freeing them from that "sense of familiarity" which hides them from our perception. But not all "old" alienation effects are ineffective. He is inspired, for example, by the alienation devices used in Breughel's paintings. Based on these and other artists' use of the V-effect, Brecht concludes that the technique is important in all arts for effective communication.

In *Formalism and Marxism*, Tony Bennett interprets the objective of formalism as wanting to shatter the concept of "directly lived and experienced" reality.<sup>13</sup> On the surface this seems close to the views of both Brecht and Lukacs, but Bennett is not talking about achieving this through the technique of alienation. He borrows Ortega y Gasset's term "dehumanization" to apply to this formalist process of shattering direct reality. This may be meant as a way of improving human aesthetic perception and insight, but it does not fit with either Lukacs's or Brecht's idea of the aesthetic effect. They both want to preserve the anthropocentric quality of art and always to view man as a social being. Brecht makes it emphatically clear that with the help of the V-effect he wants to enable the spectator to "criticize constructively from a social point of view."<sup>14</sup>

The Brechtian alienation involves the play's structure, the ordering and interrelationship of its scenes, the exposition, the language, the way the conflict is shaped through the dialogue, and how the contradictions are pointed. It involves the non-illusionistic, sometimes self-consciously cerebral use of the scenic, lighting and musical elements in the production. But perhaps the best illustration of its estranging and "confrontational" aspects is in its approach to acting. Brecht expects his actor to stand apart from his character by means of such methods as referring to the character's actions in past tense ("he said") and describing the essential attitude of the character at the time ("he said meekly") which make the actor consciously aware of the particular "social gest" that is to be created for that moment or scene. This "confrontation" between actor and character, this simultaneous presentation of the character as subject and object enables the spectator to see his "wishes not merely fulfilled but also criticized."<sup>15</sup> The spectator is not only set in the character's place as in "dramatic" theatre, he is also set to face the character, in a challenging, critical

position. So that when Brecht says that the spectator should see himself "not as the subject but as the object," he really means that he should see himself as *both* the subject and the object.

What is involved in the V-effect is that the "human social incidents" are labelled as "something striking, something that calls for explanation . . . not to be taken for granted, not just natural."<sup>16</sup> Whether the effect is called striking, jolting or discomfoting, its aim is to bring the spectator to a state of heightened awareness of a certain aspect of human social reality. The formalist "dehumanization of reality" idea is more in tune with the objectives of science which must altogether eliminate the human, emotional element from its investigation. Brecht is only seeking to break through the haze of illusion which impairs perception; to find a way out of emotional bondage in the theatre and pave the way toward a sharper, more intellectual, more open-minded vision.

Marx says in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* that the human being is larger than his thought. At the time Brecht is formulating his concept of the alienation effect, he regards the activity and stimulation of the human mind so singularly important that he seems to disagree with Marx. He speaks derisively not only about empathy, but emotions in general and certainly of the Aristotlean notion of catharsis.

### **Lukacs: from Emotions to Ethics**

The young Brecht's position thus is quite different from Lukacs's idea of the aesthetic effect.<sup>17</sup> Lukacs makes the Aristotlean catharsis the center of his definition, thereby insisting on an emotional core in the aesthetic experience, though undoubtedly he uses the term catharsis in a meaning different from Aristotle's. Catharsis to him means a moving and shaking effect that purges our passions and readies our souls for the reception and acceptance of the morally good. In drama it means that the spectator lives through the hero's struggle. Still, empathy (*Einfuhlung*) and illusion have little or no role in Lukacs's concept of the aesthetic effect either. He argues that the anthropomorphic reflection that requires illusion is religion and not art, because religion demands absolute belief in its images and symbols. Empathy, on the other hand is a common occurrence in everyday life. If empathy dominates, then the aesthetic experience is dragged down to the level of ordinary life. Lukacs passionately opposes the Nietzschean "Dionysiac intoxication" concept which he sees as nothing other than an extreme form of the empathic response.

That Lukacs opposes extreme or exclusively emotional response as the primary objective of the aesthetic effect, that he would not unconditionally accept Lessing's remark that "the only unpardonable fault of the tragic poet is this, that he leaves us cold,"<sup>18</sup> does not mean that he joins in a platonic opposition to pleasure. An examination of his theories reveals that, in fact,

he considers pleasure to be an integral part of the aesthetic experience. It is not an exaggeration to say, he writes, that "art perhaps never would have come into being if pleasure were not an important, even vital, social constituent of the life of man." The human being responds to phenomena of life positively or negatively "within the outlines of pleasure" and this fact is "crucial in the origin of every art."<sup>19</sup>

Still, the ultimate effect of the artistic experience for Lukacs is not emotional but ethical in nature. He writes extensively about the deep relationship between aesthetics and ethics, which, he believes, reveals the fact that "a truly profound aesthetic development is not possible without regard to moral problems."<sup>20</sup> He enthusiastically accepts Keats' poetic expression: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." Yet he believes that human emotions play a significant role in arriving at the final effect. The experience that results in the final ethical effect has three parts: (1) the recipient's inner state in the "before" of the effect, (2) the cathartic effect "during" the reception of the art work, and (3) the "after" period of the experience.

The receiver comes to the art work not as "tabula rasa," but as a "whole man of life" loaded down with impressions, experiences and ideas. He brings with him his personal worries and desires. But only journalistic and rhetorical works address this whole man of life directly. The true art work endeavors to create its "own world" and break into the recipient's soul-complex, suspending his concern with the petty elements of his personal life and transforming him into a sense of "man's wholeness" whose concern is the destiny of humanity. This idea is similar to Kant's, but with Lukacs it is not idealistically based; it does not rely on the dualistic notion of the phenomenal and noumenal world. Here there is no need to transcend this world. There is only a need to transcend one's petty, personal concerns and to see one's future as a part of the future of humanity.

The aesthetic effect itself, the recipient's experience "during" the taking-in of the art work, is not purely emotional even though it has catharsis at its core. Lukacs is as skeptical of merely emotional artistic effects as Brecht is. He accepts Lessing's definition of catharsis as "the transformation of passions into virtuous habits," and finds it applicable not only to tragedy, but to all of the arts. The moving, purging effect provided by the arts "causes us to become better human beings," to develop in us "the readiness for the morally good." Yet he does not believe that the "moral problems" presented by the art work (whether timely or universal) should be expected to be solved during the presentation of the work. "The problems remain problems, they 'merely' broaden man's horizons and reveal conditions and consequences otherwise doomed to oblivion."<sup>21</sup> The experience which changes the "whole man of life" into "man's wholeness," fills the individual with "new and freshly seen contents" and forces him/her to take in this world with "rejuvenated senses and thinking."<sup>22</sup>

The permeation of the individual by a sense of wholeness and membership in ongoing humanity is only temporary. "After" the intense cathartic experience, the recipient goes back to the problems of his/her personal life. But as Lukacs's "great river of life" metaphor illustrates, s/he takes into his/her own veins the cleansing effect of the art-work. It is here, in the "after" phase, that the aesthetic effect proper overflows into ethics. The cultural, attitudinal change brought about this way is slow and usually imperceptible, but frequently, a "single art-work may bring a complete turnabout in a man's life."<sup>23</sup> Whatever the degree of change, the aesthetic effect is indirect, because the cathartic effect directly touches only a person's sense of wholeness, modifying individual interests only through that cleansing filter. In Lukacs's perception of the whole process, life feeds into art (the river branches off) and art feeds back into life (the cleaner waters rejoin the river) unendingly, so that both life and art are constantly enriched.

### **The Differences--Lukacs's Critique of Brecht**

From this point of view, Lukacs's critique of Brecht's notion of the aesthetic effect begins with the rhetorical dimension of Brecht's early work. The rhetorical elements in the art-work address not the individual's sense of wholeness, but the whole person of everyday life, because they speak to practical, timely problems. What should happen in the "after" phase, happens "during" the reception of the work. The cathartic effect is prevented and the experience is not aesthetic in nature. Of course, Lukacs admits that a certain amount of rhetoric can and does exist in art-works without interfering with their greatness. But aesthetic greatness in such cases occurs despite and not because of the rhetoric.

Brecht's V-effect not only endeavors consciously to prevent catharsis, it also changes the language of his art, Lukacs argues, from sensuous to abstract. Indeed, it is not difficult to verify that the most rhetorical of Brecht's plays (e.g. *The Mother*, *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*) are also the most abstract in their language. This, Lukacs would argue, not only keeps out emotions, it also prevents the creation of effective, sensuous characterizations. But the main idea of the V-effect, Lukacs knows, is not just to eliminate emotions. The main idea is to make it possible for the spectator (without empathic involvement) to recognize the object in the art-work and also to see it as strange. Lukacs, though using different terms, agrees with this objective, but does not believe that the imposition of unintegrated alienation devices is necessary to achieve it. The tension between subject and object is already inherent in the dramatic form, he argues, referring for example to Chekhov's brilliant portrayal of the conflict between his characters' subjective intentions and objective directions. If this is what Brecht wants through alienation, says Lukacs, he is knocking on open doors.

Brecht contends that his epic theatre with its alienation devices is necessary, because the "dramatic" theatre portrays the structure of society as something that cannot be changed or influenced by the spectators in the theatre. If we think of Lukacs's metaphorical description of the effective interplay between life and art, we realize that he must disagree. But he also agrees. Theatre (art) in his view does influence the direction of society, but only indirectly through ethical changes in human beings. It does not, nor is it usually capable of causing changes by directly addressing current social problems and persuading the spectators to make the political or economic changes that seem necessary.

### The Common Grounds and the Changes in Brecht's Views

There is much, however, that Lukacs finds sound and reasonable in Brecht's ideas behind the V-effect. He finds it appealing that Brecht wants to destroy not only the illusions (magic) of the theatre, but also the illusions, false hopes and false consciousness in the spectators. Brecht wants an alert audience that cannot be fooled by clichés and the facade of reality. The facade, the surface of reality, the "familiar" that Brecht wants to break through is the same as Lukacs's concept of the "appearance" of everyday life which tends to hide things and confuse the casual observer. When Lukacs looks to the art-work for its ability to get beneath the appearance and create the typical and the essential, he is in complete agreement with Brecht who wants to enable the spectator through the art-work to see social relationships in a familiar context but in an entirely new ("strange") light. Though some of their means are different, they both want art to hurdle the obstacles on the way to the truth.

Mittenzwei holds, as do most commentators on Brecht's aesthetics, that Brecht was a "great opponent of Aristotleanism" and that their views on the role of catharsis in the aesthetic experience was what set Brecht and Lukacs farthest apart.<sup>24</sup> But Brecht's position cannot be considered truly anti-Aristotlean. His is a negative reaction to an over-simplified aesthetic concept he *calls* Aristotleanism. He never gives us anything near to a complete critique of Aristotle's *Poetics*, nor an indication that he read the entire document. He talks only about a few aspects of Aristotle's theory (what he does not like) and on those he partly contradicts himself and partly changes his mind over the years. We have seen that in fact, despite his theoretical protestation to the contrary, in much of his own dramaturgy and in some of his reactions to bad productions of his plays (e.g. his critique of the New York production of *The Mother*), he insists on the causal-sequential structuring of the incidents. Such structuring of the plot (story) is the quintessential Aristotlean dramaturgical principle. Furthermore, starting about 1939 with his criticism of certain of the rhetorical and political aspects of Piscator's



theatre,<sup>25</sup> he begins to work toward striking a balance between entertainment and didacticism on the one hand and reason and emotion on the other.

In light of this, when Lukacs alleges that Brecht, despite his justly suspicious attitude toward emotionalism, manages to hold on to the "seed of catharsis,"<sup>26</sup> he is not far off the mark. Not only do Brecht's late plays tend to evoke a cathartic effect (sometimes to Brecht's displeasure as in the case of the ending of *Mother Courage*), but Brecht's theoretical position also shows a significant shift. In a 1941 diary entry he expresses his wish to free himself from the warring opposition of reason and emotion.<sup>27</sup> In later writings, though still skeptical about such things as the "class basis" of emotions,<sup>28</sup> he continues to work toward the reconciliation of the two. In 1949 he denies that epic theatre ever proclaimed the slogan "Reason this side, Emotion (feeling) that." He goes on to say that epic theatre "by no means renounces emotion," in fact it tries to arouse in its spectators certain emotions such as "the sense of justice, the urge to freedom and righteous anger." The critical attitude that the epic theatre wants to awaken in its audience, he concludes, "cannot be passionate enough."<sup>29</sup>

To see clearly the late Brecht's view of emotions in the theatre, we need to look at the ideas expressed in *A Short Organum For the Theatre* and *Der Messingkauf*. In the *Short Organum* he is trying to lay the theoretical foundations of a theatre designed for the masses that is masterfully entertaining, critical in approach and ethical in aim. For the achievement of such objectives he finds the existing theatre completely inadequate. If we want to know why, he says, all we have to do is to observe the behavior of the audience at one of the performances. They are tense (unless they are exhausted, probably from boredom), they do not communicate and they generally behave as if asleep or hypnotized. "Their eyes are open, but they stare rather than see, just as they listen rather than hear. They look at the stage as if in a trance."<sup>30</sup> And what is responsible for bringing on this state of zombie-like behavior? Empathy. Not all emotions are undesirable in the theatre, only empathy.

It is a mistake to conclude, he writes in a letter to his friend Mordecai Gorelik in 1944, that the epic theatre is against all emotions. "Reason and emotion," he states categorically, "can't be divided."<sup>31</sup> The epic theatre is different from the conventional theatre in that it tries to examine emotions, not merely to stimulate them. Still, one emotion, empathy, because of its paralyzing effect on the senses and minds of the spectators must be eliminated from the theatre. "Does getting rid of empathy mean getting rid of every emotional element?" asks the Actor in *Der Messingkauf*. "No, no," comes the unhesitating answer of the *Philosopher*. "Neither the public nor the actor must be stopped from taking part emotionally; the representation of emotions must not be hampered, nor must the actors use of emotions be frustrated. Only one of many possible sources of emotion needs to be left unused, or at least

treated as a subsidiary source--empathy.<sup>32</sup> This finally makes Brecht's position on emotion and reason in a theatre performance clear.

Does such a shift in Brecht's views on the role of emotions finally bring him into complete agreement with Lukacs's idea of the aesthetic effect? They both favor an art whose ultimate effect on human beings is ethical. They agree that both reason and emotion play a significant role in the aesthetic experience and the obstacles they both want to eliminate are mostly associated with empathy. They both fight against empathy. Even Mittenzwei admits that Lukacs is an even stronger opponent of empathy than Brecht, who never wavers on this. The appropriate question then is: Do they define empathy the same way? Not according to Mittenzwei who believes that for Brecht, to the end of his life, "Aristotelean cathartic effect means primarily empathy."<sup>33</sup> But the stimulation of empathy is not an Aristotelean principle, it is only that in Brecht's vocabulary. Though it is very difficult for scholars to agree on the meaning of Aristotle's cryptic definition of catharsis, it is quite evident from a reading of the entire text of the *Poetics* that he does not mean empathy by it. Aristotle's catharsis, the purging of emotions, is the "final cause" of tragedy, brought on at the end by the resolution of the action. The empathy Brecht dislikes is a strong emotional identification with characters and objects throughout the performance which keeps the spectators from making independent critical judgements about the decisions and actions of those characters.

Mittenzwei asserts that what is empathy for Brecht is "re-living" for Lukacs, but his argument is not supportable. The empathy that Lukacs opposes consists of immersion in the vicarious experiencing of another's feelings whose "objective essence is either unknown or is a matter of indifference to us" and which, we fully understand, has no ultimate impact on our lives.<sup>34</sup> The "art-works" (especially novels, plays and films) which stimulate this kind of feeling are trivial and escapist. They do not reflect the world as reflection is understood in Lukacs's theory of realism. Experiencing a performance of a *Faust*, *Oedipus*, or a *Hamlet*, does not call forth this kind of feeling. We "re-live" or "live through" the heroes' struggles in such dramas realizing that the objective significance of their choices and actions *does* have a meaning for our lives.

For Lukacs, catharsis in art is "that moving and shaking effect, that convulsion which is provided by tragedy, comedy, the novel, the good painting, the good statue and the musical creation, that purging of our passions" which "causes us to become better human beings than we were" and develops in us "the readiness for the morally good."<sup>35</sup> Though Aristotle writes only about tragedy, this definition of catharsis is reasonably consistent with the *Poetics*. The late Brecht, who calls emotion and reason in art inseparable, could not disagree with Lukacs's implication that without emotion there is no tragedy and no great art. Insofar as Lukacs's concept of catharsis is not an endorsement

of empathy or emotionalism and does not strip reason of its rightful role in art, it is fully consistent with the position of the late Brecht.

It would be going too far to say that Brecht "abandons" his earlier position on the aesthetic effect, even though that is just the term he uses in the "prologue" of his *Short Organum*. He abandons only his dryly rhetorical "learning play" concept, not the whole idea of a cerebral theatre. He becomes more concerned about sensuousness and enjoyment than before, but he makes it clear that the things that create enjoyment in art are: the understanding of reality, the justification of world view, the reinforcement of the will to live and the perfection of the aesthetic reflection.<sup>36</sup> He definitely "mellows," as Willett puts it, regarding his early rigid insistence on the disruption of the spectator's emotional involvement by means of the alienation effect. He still holds most of the ideas that gave birth to the concept of the epic theatre, but is now working toward a more advanced "dialectic" theatre. "Dialectic" theatre is never fully defined, but it would presumably accommodate the late changes in his aesthetics. It does not seem to include "Verfremdung" or alienation, for no mention is made of it in a late glossary of important terms.<sup>37</sup> These changes lead some of his contemporaries to think that he has become a conventional dramatist. In an interview with Brecht in 1949, East-German playwright Friedrich Wolf suggests that *Mother Courage* "would have been more effective" if the mother had made, or given at least a hint of, a realization of her mistakes at the end. But, in response, Brecht makes it clear that he still wants nothing to do with the traditional character discovery of conventional tragedy. What *Mother Courage* learns matters little; what the audience learns by observing her is of the greatest importance.<sup>38</sup>

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## Notes

1. The debate originated with Lukacs's critique of the work of Willi Bredel in *Linkskurve* (1931) and his comments on Ernst Ottwalt's documentary novel (*Denn sie wissen, was sie tun*) in 1932. Lukacs's 1934 essay, "Expressionism: its Significance and Decline," published in *Internationale Literatur*, sparked a long debate conducted mostly in *Das Wort* until 1939. Those participating in the early debate included Klaus Mann, Alfred Kurella, Klaus Berger, Bela Balazs, Ernst Bloch, Anna Seghers, Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin. Contributions to the debate by Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch and Frederic Jameson can be found in *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: NLB, 1977). Other notable contributions include: Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology* (New York: The Free Press, 1960), Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht* (London: NLB, 1973), Eric Bentley, *The Brecht Commentaries* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1981), Russel Berman's essay in the *New German Critique* 10 (1977), Robert D'Amico in *Telos* 22 (Winter 1974-75), Bela Kopecki in the *New Hungarian Quarterly* (Winter 1966), Albert

William Levi, *Humanism and Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1969), Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1982), Werner Mittenzwei, *Brechts Verhältnis zur Tradition* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1972), Mittenzwei and others in *Preserve and Create* (New York: Humanities Press, 1973), Andras Sandor in the *New German Critique* 1 (1973) and Viktor Zmegac in *Neohelicon* 9 (1982).

2. John Willett, trans., *Brecht On Theatre* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964) 79.
3. Walter Benjamin, "Conversations with Brecht," *New Left Review* 77 (1973): 51-58.
4. Willett 79.
5. 270.
6. 71.
7. Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke* (Collected Works) 17 (Frankfurt on the Main: Suhrkamp, 1967) 1083. In the following this edition is cited as GW.
8. Herta Ramthun, ed., *Bertolt Brecht Diaries, 1920-1922* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979) 32.
9. Willett 99.
10. Victor Shklovsky, quoted in J. Culler, *Saussure* (London: Fontana, 1976) 36.
11. Willett 225.
12. 225.
13. Tony Bennett, *Formalism and Marxism* (New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1979) 55.
14. Willett 125.
15. GW 17, 992.
16. Willett 125.
17. The ideas examined here are those of the Marxist Lukacs, as expressed primarily in his *Aesthetic*.
18. G. E. Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, trans. Helen Zimmern (New York, 1962) 45.
19. Gyorgy Lukacs, *Az esztetikum sajátossága II* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiado, 1969) 516.
20. *Az esztetikum sajátossága I*, 487-88.
21. 488.
22. Gyorgy Lukacs, *Muveszet es tarsadalom* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiado, 1968) 326.
23. *Az esztetikum sajátossága I*, 785.
24. Werner Mittenzwei, "The Brecht-Lukacs Debate," in *Preserve and Create*, eds. Gaylord LeRoy and Ursula Beitz (New York: Humanities Press, 1973) 219.
25. Willett 130.
26. *Az esztetikum sajátossága I* 765.
27. Lukacs quotes Brecht in, *Az esztetikum sajátossága II* 172.
28. GW 15, 242.
29. Willett 227.
30. 187.
31. 162.
32. GW 16, 585.
33. Mittenzwei 221-222.
34. *Az esztetikum sajátossága II* 773.
35. Gyorgy Lukacs, "A muvészet mint felepitmeny" (a special publication of the Hungarian Cultural Ministry, 1955) 26.
36. GW 19, 551.
37. Willett 246.
38. 229.