
Providing Space to the Marginalized: Bertolt Brecht's Reception of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*

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ABSTRACT

The popularity of John Gay's political satire play *The Beggar's Opera* in the English literary world prompted a German writer, Bertolt Brecht, to respond to the work. The purpose of this study is to describe Bertolt Brecht's reception of Gay's Play *The Beggar's Opera* in Brecht's Play *Die Dreigroschenoper*. The data sources in this study are the text of Brecht's play entitled *Die Drei Groschenoper* and the text of Gay's play *The Beggar's Opera*. This research is based on the theory of Reception Aesthetics by Hans Robert Jauss. The results show that Brecht's reception was influenced by his horizon of expectations, which plays a central role in determining a writer's reception of a work of literature. Brecht's horizon of expectations, which is related to his Marxist view, distinguishes Brecht's play from that by Gay. Brecht's intention to make a play that enlightens his audience made him present a more explicit depiction of marginalized people in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, which was performed in the form of epic theater (*episches Theater*). By providing space to the marginalized, Brecht aimed to criticize capitalism which began to grow in Germany after the country's loss in the First World War and divided the German society into two classes, resulting in various social issues. Brecht's criticisms are different from Gay's criticisms in shedding some light on the moral degradation in England at the time.

Keywords: *horizon of expectations, space, marginal, play, reception*

INTRODUCTION

In the English literary world, John Gay is widely known as a playwright and poet. His famous work, *The Beggar's Opera*, written in 1728, and his membership in the Scriblerus Club (a group of satire writers) have established him as a reputable writer in the English literature. The Scriblerus Club made Gay a sharp writer in delivering satire, especially in social and political affairs. *The Beggar's Opera* is a satire on Italian opera and contains poignant social criticisms through the marginalized characters in London. This was a popular opera which lasted long throughout the next decade, especially with the development of the comic opera and musical theatre in England (Blamires, 2003).

Social injustice in the London Soho is the theme of this three-act opera. The main characters, Peachum, Macheath, and Lockit, represent the elite and middle-class crooks, the police officers, and prostitute respectively (Bernhardt, 2017). John Gay's depiction of the lives of these marginalized characters further inspired Bertolt Brecht to write a play which serves as a response to *The Beggar's Opera*.

Bertolt Brecht was a famed writer and playwright in Germany. As a reception of *The Beggar's Opera*, Brecht wrote *Die Dreigroschenoper* in 1928. The play was first performed on stage in the same year (Kittstein, 2008). The two plays contain social criticisms in their depiction of the lives of marginalized

people, namely beggars, criminals, and prostitutes.

Die Dreigroschenoper tells a story about the feud between two characters, namely Macheath, the king of crooks, and Jonathan Peachum, the king of beggars. Macheath is notorious for his criminal acts, and Peachum is in fact a businessman who exploits beggars for profit. The resolution to the story is ironic, as Macheath, who is found guilty of his crimes ends up being pardoned by Queen Victoria, and even being given a lifetime pension and a position as a royalty (Kittstein, 2008).

Other similarities of the two plays are that the center of the story lies in the marginalized groups of beggars and crooks, as well as that they focus on class difference in the society. Nevertheless, Brecht presents a slightly different depiction in his play. This difference is due to Brecht's horizon of expectations when writing *Die Dreigroschenoper*. This study examines the difference between Brecht's reception and Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*.

Horizon of expectation (*Horizonerwartung*) as defined by Jauss (Jauss, 1970) in his second thesis, is a horizon which the readers has when they are reading a new text. Horizon of expectation is the actual experience, whereas *Vorwissen* is the literary experience. *Vorwissen* becomes the moment of experience. Because of that, something new becomes more familiar, and even more so in the context of experience.

Furthermore, Jauss also proposes that a literary work does not present itself as something new, but as something which aims to enlighten the readers through either hidden or obvious symbols, explicit or implicit clues, to obtain a distinguished way of reception (Jauss, 1970).

“Ein literarisches Werk, auch wenn es neu erscheint, präsentiert sich nicht als absolute Neuheit in einem informatorischen Vakuum, sondern prädisponiert sein Publikum durch Ankündigungen, offene und versteckte Signale, vertraute Merkmale oder implizite Hinweise für eine ganz bestimmte Weise der Rezeption.”

A literary work, even if it appears new, does not present itself as an absolute novelty in an informational vacuum, but rather predisposes its audience to a very specific way of reception through announcements, overt and hidden signals, familiar features or implicit indications.

A new text evokes or wakes the horizon of expectations of the readers, as well as laws of texts that they have read before, which are then varied, corrected, modified and reproduced—or in other words, actualized (Jauss, 1970).

According to Jauss, the possibility of realizing the horizon of expectations has been presented by the literary works. The specific disposition of a particular work, which the writer has previously anticipated from the readers (in the case where explicit signs are not many), can be assessed from three general factors. The three factors are the known norms or the immanent poeticness of a literary work, the implicit relation between the works and the literature's historical environment in addition to the clash between fiction and reality, the poetic function, and the language practical function, all of which are experienced by the readers who conduct reflections during the reading process as a possibility to hold a comparison (Jauss, 1970).

In the same line, Holub's view on Jauss's notion of the horizon of expectation is as follows: “Horizon of expectation would appear to refer to an intersubjective system or structure of expectation, a system of references or a mind-set that a hypothetical individual might bring to any text (Holub, 1984).”

Conger, in his writing entitled *Rezeptionsästhetik and England's Reception of Eighteenth-Century German Literature*, states that literary works create their own expectations, which are not entirely new, yet remain special. The reader's capacity to receive is called a reception (*rezeption*), the power to influence a text is referred to as *wirkung*, and the expectation is named the horizon of expectation (*erwartungshorizont*). According to Jauss, readers are not doing a passive action in reading, but are actively responding to their own horizon of expectations and challenging the text with their social expectations (Conger, 1981).

The first study on horizon of expectations was conducted by Qazi Nazir Uddin in his dissertation *Horison of Expectations the Reception of Rabindranath Tagore in the United State (1913- 41)* (Uddin, 1985). The dissertation is a study on the reception of Rabindranath Tagore in the United States and England between 1913 and 1941. From his analysis, Uddin infers that English and American readers were not capable of judging the values or quality of Tagore's poems with specific norms or idealness to determine whether they were good. The analysis of the

Western response to Tagore's works in terms of the appreciation and expectations for them suggests that Tagore's readers in the West were under the influence of Orientalism, which was manifested further in their appreciation (disappointment).

Study of the horizon of expectations was also done by Thompson (1993), presented in his paper, *Jaussian Expectation and the Production of Medieval Narrative: The Case of "Saint Eustace" and Sir Isumbras, Exemplaria*. In the paper, Thompson discusses how horizon of expectations influence the narrative production of two literary works in the middle age. Similarities in the legends are influenced by the writers' horizon of expectations on the romance model, which later affects the production and reception of the romance.

Studies of reception and the horizon of expectations in Brecht's work as a reception of John Gay's works have not been done so far. A paper entitled *Brecht's Victorian Version of Gay: Imitation and Originality in the Dreigroschenoper* by Ulrich Weisstein compares the plays *The Beggar's Opera* and *Die Dreigroschenoper* from two different perspectives, namely the moral and aesthetic perspectives (Weisstein, 2012).

Another study, which discusses the two plays, was done by Richard Salmon in *Two Operas for Beggars: A Political Reading* (1981). The study looks at Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* and Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* from a political reading perspective. The article centers on the political perspective and draws the conclusion that both works criticize capitalism, only with different terms (Salmon, 1981).

Compared to the previous studies, the current study's novelty lies in its focus on Brecht's reception of *The Beggar's Opera* that sheds light on Brecht's horizon of expectations, particularly on how the marginalized are depicted in *Die Dreigroschenoper*. The different historical contexts of both plays result in the differences in the focus of the plays.

This study discusses *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *The Beggar's Opera* as literary texts instead of on-stage performances. In order to examine Brecht's reception of *The Beggar's Opera*, a reception perspective is necessary. Brecht's Marxist background is suspected to influence his unique reception of Gay's work. In this context, a comparative analysis of the two plays is carried out to identify their similarities and differences. Brecht's horizon of expectations in

writing *Die Dreigroschenoper* can be observed on the basis of the differences between the two plays.

The source of the primary data is Bertolt Brecht's play in German *Die Drei Groschenoper*, published by Suhrkamp in 2015 (Brecht, 2015) and the e-book of *The Beggars Opera* by John Gay, documented by Project Gutenberg in <http://www.gutenberg.org/2/5/0/6/25063/> (Gay, 2008). The source of the secondary data is the historical accounts of the period during which the two plays were written. The research data comprises the words, phrases, and lines in both plays which contain information on Brecht's reception of *The Beggars Opera* in his play *Die Dreigroschenoper*. The stages of this study are as follows: (1) conducting an analysis of the marginalized people in Brecht's *Die Drei Groschenoper* and Gay's *The Beggars Opera*, (2) conducting a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences between the marginalized people in the two plays, and (3) analyzing Brecht's horizon of expectations based on the similarities and differences identified in the previous stage, as well as Brecht's reception of *The Beggars Opera* in his play *Die Dreigroschenoper*.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Marginalized People in John Gay and Bertolt Brecht's Plays

Both *The Beggar's Opera* and *Die Dreigroschenoper* explore a social theme in the form of satire that is conveyed through the characters that represent the marginalized people. Despite the similar themes, these plays have different main focuses that are affected by the time in which the two plays were written. Brecht's *Die Dreigroschenoper* was written in 1928, whereas Gay's *The Beggar Opera* was written in 1728, which makes the two plays 200 years apart. This time difference has an impact on the historical contexts of the plays, especially in how Brecht's play delivers the criticisms. While *The Beggar Opera* sheds light on the moral degradation in Newgate, London, *Die Dreigroschenoper* highlights capitalism as the background of the society's moral degradation, which began to thrive in post-World War I Germany. As such, the depiction of marginalized people in the two plays can be broken down as follows.

According to Bankovskaya, the marginalized refers to the unclassifiable, the poor, criminals, the no-roots, the homeless, etc. as opposed to

the neutral, formal, or even sympathetic terms (migrants, non-citizens, double citizens, refugees, comrade) (Bankovskaya, 2014). Kurniawati (2011) explains that the term *marginalization* prompts a dialectic between two analytical social categories, i.e. the center (the mainstream) and an area of 'the margin'. While the center is typically associated with domination, privilege, and authority, the margin represents relative powerlessness (Kurniawati, 2012)1987. Setiadi adds that marginalized people are those who are marginalized or pushed aside from the social life of a society. The term also refers to the lower class of a society. In both *The Beggar's Opera* and *Die Dreigroschenoper*, there are three types of marginalized people represented, namely the beggars, the criminals, and the prostitutes (Ign. Dadut Setiadi, 2018).

The Beggars

Beggars are people who are begging for money by lowering themselves and relying on pity. They are categorized as a social welfare issue (Mawaza, 2020). Beggars are a common trope in literary works, whether as the main characters or supporting characters. In *The Beggar's Opera*, despite being in the main title, the beggar character as one of the marginalized people in the play is not the main character. The character only appears in the beginning of the act, in a dialogue between the beggar and the player. The beggar brings an opera that he writes and attempts to assure that his opera follows the convention of a proper opera, despite the slight difference in the form.

".....I hope I may be forgiven, that I have not made my opera throughout unnatural, like those in vogue; for I have no recitative; excepting this, as I have consented to have neither prologue nor epilogue, it must be allowed an opera in all its forms..... (Gay, 2008)."

In the beginning of the play, the beggar explains how his opera is different from the common opera because it has no recitations, neither a prologue nor an epilogue. After introducing the opera, the beggar does not appear further in the play and has no significant role.

In contrast to *The Beggar's Opera*, Brecht's *Die Dreigroschenoper* gives a more central role to the beggars. Appearing in the beginning of the play is Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum as the boss of the

beggars in London who organizes and exploits them as a source of income for himself. Peachum organizes the London area into 14 districts with 1,432 beggars in his business. The beggars must have a professional license to work. Interestingly, the very same character is also present in *The Beggar's Opera* as a criminal. The following is a line from the dialogue between Peachum and a beggar named Filch.

Peachum : "Also, Lizenzen werden nur an Professionals verlichen. Zeigt geschäftsmäßig einen Stadtplan. London ist eingeteilt in vierzehn Distrikte. Jeder Mann, der in einem davon das Bettlerhandwerk auszuüben gedenkt, braucht, eine Lizenz von Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum und Co. Ja, da könnte jeder kommen eine Beute seiner Triebe (Brecht, 2015)."

Peachum : "Well, the license can only be awarded to a professional. *Showing a map of a city in a professional manner.* London is divided into 14 districts. Anyone who wants to be a beggar needs a license from Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum and Co. Otherwise, anyone would just come and get what they want."

This line shows the depiction of the life of the beggars in *Die Dreigroschenoper*. In fact, applicants must pay for the beggar's license, as Peachum does not give it away for free.

In the following *Nebentext*, Peachum attempts to influence Filch so that he unsuspectingly follows what Peachum tells him to do. Filch is initially hesitant to pay, but Peachum has his way of subtly convincing him by showing a poster on the wall, making Filch pay unwillingly.

Filch : *Herr Peachum. Zeigt flehend auf ein Plakat, auf dem steht: "Verschließt euer Ohr nicht dem Elend!" Peachum zeigt auf den Vorhang vor einem Schaukasten, auf dem steht: "Gib, so wird dir gegeben!"*

(Brecht, 2015).

Filch : Mr. Peachum. Filch slightly glances at the poster, which says: "Do not cover your ears on sorrow!"

Peachum points at a screen in front of a window shop, which says: "Give, and you will receive."

The London beggars are given out different costumes which represent five groups. The first one are those who are pushed aside by the development of modern traffic, the second one are war victims, the third one are those who are unable to keep up with the rapid industrialization, the fourth group consists of the pitiful ones, and the last group are the hopeful young men (Brecht, 2015).

The beggars, in addition to being exploited by Peachum to make himself rich, are also used to press Brown, the London police commissioner to arrest the character Macheath. Peachum rallies the beggars to go on strike and disrupt London's main roads during the coronation of Queen Victoria. Peachum expects that the disruption of the coronation by the beggars will drag Brown's reputation down. The beggar's rally eventually forces Brown to agree to arrest Macheath.

The play depicts how the beggars prepare posters for the rally in the third act by writing "*Mein Auge gab ich dem König*" (I am giving my eyes to the King), etc. These posters are held up in the rally in the main roads along which the Queen will travel for her coronation (Brecht, 2015).

Peachum has managed to trick the beggars without them realizing that they have been used. The beggars thought they were supporting the Queen's coronation, not realizing that what they did had disrupted the Queen's coronation ceremony.

In Brecht's reception of Gay's play, the depictions of the beggars are certainly different. Unlike the beggar character in *The Beggar's Opera*, who only appears in the prologue and the main title, the beggars in Brecht's play have an important role which affects the plot. This means that there is a shift in the role of beggars in *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Brecht's different perspective in the reception is influenced by his own horizon of expectations when writing the play.

The Criminals

Crime can be defined as any action which violates the law and social norms, and therefore are highly disapproved of by society (Kartono, 2015). Criminals are those who commit criminal acts and deserve punishments based on the constitutions. The criminals

in *The Beggar's Opera* are Peachum and Macheath, whereas in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, the criminal is Macheath. Despite the same name, there is a significant difference between the Peachum character in Gay's play and that in Brecht's play. In *The Beggar's Opera*, Peachum is a criminal who buys stolen things from a robber or a thief and reports them if he does not make enough money from them, so that he can claim the prize money for catching a criminal. By contrast, in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Peachum is not a conventional criminal, as he smartly exploits the licensed beggars and gets his money from them.

In the first act of *The Beggar's Opera*, Peachum is depicted in a dialogue with Filch as a crook, a fence for stolen goods, who has no problem betraying the thieves who sell their stuff to him. His relationship with the thieves as well as with the government and the justice system can be seen from his conversation with a crook named Black Moll. Peachum has the power to decide whether the arrested criminals can be released or put in prison.

Filch : "Sir, Black Moll hath sent word her trial comes on in the afternoon and she hopes you will order matters so as to bring her off.

Peachum : "Why, she may plead her belly at worst; to my knowledge she hath taken care of that security. But, as the wench is very active and industrious, you may satisfy her that I'll soften the evidence.

Filch : "Tom Gagg, Sir, is found guilty (Gay, 2008)."

In *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Peachum makes a business out of poverty. He capitalizes on poverty and misfortune and turns them into a money-making commodity. He exploits the beggars of Soho, London and organizes them strategically to obtain revenue for himself. His business is named *Bettlers Freunde* (The Beggar Friends) and has 11 branches and 1,432 members who work in 14 districts across London. The beggar's professional license is discussed in a conversation between Peachum and a beggar named Filch, as follows.

Peachum : "*Also, Lizenzen werden nur an Professionals verlichen. Zeigt geschäftsmäßig einen*

Stadtplan. London ist eingeteilt in vierzehn Distrikte. Jeder Mann, der in einem davon das Bettlerhandwerk auszuüben gedenkt, braucht, eine Lizenz von Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum und Co. Ja, da könnte jeder kommen eine Beute seiner Triebe (Brecht, 2015)."

Peachum : "Well, the license can only be awarded to a professional. *Showing a map of a city in a professional manner.* London is divided into 14 districts. Anyone who wants to be a beggar needs a license from Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum and Co. Otherwise, anyone can come to get what they want."

This depiction shows that Peachum's role in *Die Dreigroschenoper* is not that of a criminal, but a crook businessman who exploits the beggars.

Another criminal in *The Beggar's Opera* is Macheath, which is also present in *Die Dreigroschenoper* as the king of bandits in Soho. In *The Beggar's Opera*, Macheath is a strong robber which sometimes works with Peachum in various criminal acts. His crime in *The Beggar's Opera* is not as terrible as in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, in which he is portrayed as incredibly evil and cruel, although he can be tender and nice to women. Macheath's bad deeds can be seen in the Prologue song.

*"Und der Haifisch, der hat Zähne
Und die trägt er im Gesicht
Und Macheath, der hat ein Messer
Doch das Messer sieht man nicht (Brecht, 2015)."*

The song describes Macheath as a shark with sharp teeth. Sharks are sea predators that are notorious for their sharp teeth and viciousness, which are all appropriately attributed to Macheath who has a hidden dagger for a weapon. This hidden dagger shows the character's great power as the king of crooks and earns him the title of *Mackie Messer* (Mackie the Dagger). Macheath has done many terrible things, that is, being responsible for people falling to their deaths in a dam, murders on the beach, money robbery, arson, and rape; all of which are described in the above verse.

In addition to the prologue, Macheath's terrible shark-like deeds are also told in Scene 2 in Act 2 through the perspective of Polly, Macheath's wife, who

learns that her father and the police commissioner Brown have made a deal to arrest Macheath and put him in prison. Brown tells Polly that the Scotland Yard has no proof of Macheath's crime, which prompts Polly to show Macheath that she has all the proofs in the form of a list of criminal acts that she reads to him.

*".....Du hast zwei Kaufleute umgebracht,
über dreißig Einbrücke, dreiundzwanzig
Straßenüberfälle, Brandlegungen, vorsätzliche
Mörde, Fälschungen, Meineide, alles in eineinhalb
Jahren. Du bist ein schrecklicher Mensch. Und
in Winchester hast du zwei minderjährige
Schwestern verführt... (Brecht, 2015)."*

According to Polly, Macheath has murdered two store owners and committed more than 30 robberies, 23 street robberies, arson, rape of two sisters, fraud, fake oath, and sexual offence against minor. Until then, Macheath has managed to get away from the law.

On the contrary, Macheath's crime is not detailed in *The Beggar's Opera*, as he is only portrayed as the leader of a gang of robbers that are devoted to him (Gay, 2008). Moreover, Macheath is always surrounded by women because he is good at seducing them, including Polly, who is Peachum's daughter, and Lucy, the daughter of the prison guard, Lockit.

The portrayal and role of the criminal character in Brecht's play shows that as a reception, his work is different from Gay's play. Compared to the character in *The Beggar's Opera*, the criminal in Brecht's play shows more intensity in his crimes. Certainly, the social condition during Brecht's time when writing *Die Dreigroschenoper* is different from that of Gay's when he wrote *The Beggar's Opera*. This difference creates different horizons of expectations, and as a result, the criminal in Brecht's play becomes crueller and more brutal than the crooks in *The Beggar's Opera*, namely Macheath and Peachum.

The Prostitutes

Another marginalized group that appears in both *The Beggar's Opera* and *Die Dreigroschenoper* are the prostitutes. Prostitutes and prostitution are related words. Hoigard and Finstadt (2008, 15) define prostitution as the trade of sexual service for a cash reward. In their book, *My Body Is Not Mine* (2008), Hoigard and Finstadt elaborate how prostitution occurs, whether openly or discreetly (Hoigard,

Cecilie & Finstad, 2008). In *Wirtschaftlexikon*, (2018) prostitution refers to the sexual service which is traded for some sort of payment. It may happen freely and willingly without coercion, as opposed to human trafficking and slavery (*Prostitution ist die Bereitstellung sexueller Dienstleistungen gegen Entgelt. Sie kann in Freiheit und Freiwilligkeit erfolgen oder unter Zwang (Zwangsprostitution), in Verbindung mit Menschenhandel und Sklaverei*) (“Wirtschaftlexikon,” 2018).

The prostitutes in the red district area appear in both *The Beggar's Opera* and *Die Dreigroschenoper*. In *The Beggar's Opera*, they appear with Macheath in Act 2 Scene 4, consisting of Mrs. Coaxer, Dolly Trull, Mrs. Vixen, Betty Doxy, Jenny Diver, Mrs. Slammekin, Suky Tawdry, and Molly Brazen, who live in the prostitution complex. In the same act and scene, Macheath is partying with the prostitutes and seducing them, as well as singing and dancing with them while drinking wine. Meanwhile, Peachum looks over them from afar and moments later enters the scene with a couple of police officers to arrest Macheath. Peachum manages to catch Macheath after gaining information from two prostitutes who betray Macheath, namely Suki Tawdry and Jenny.

In *Die Dreigroschenoper*, the life of the prostitutes is depicted in more detail. Macheath's moments with the prostitutes can be seen in Act 2. The prostitutes in the play are a group of women who work by offering sexual service. In Soho London, they live together in a prostitution complex in Turnbrigde (wapping). The life of the prostitutes is portrayed in their daily activities, such as washing, ironing clothes, and daydreaming that representing a harmonious life of the middle class. Additionally, Macheath's relationship with one of the prostitutes, Jenny, is described in the play, until she betrays him to the police.

The difference in the portrayal of prostitutes in Brecht's and Gay's plays indicates that Brecht's reception is in fact different from Gay's play. With his horizon of expectations, Brecht attempts to depict the world of prostitution that is different from the one depicted by Gay in his play. The prostitutes are also shown to have more presence in the play, as represented by Jenny, whose story is told in a separate act. Jenny's willingness to accept the challenge from Peachum and his wife to find Macheath shows that money is everything to her, even if it means that she

must give up her friendship with Macheath.

Bertolt Brecht's Reception of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*

Bertolt Brecht's reception of *The Beggar's Opera* is influenced by his adherence to Marxist ideology. His life is strongly influenced by Marxism as a philosophy. Marxism refers to the ideology of Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883). His affiliation with Marxism begins with his friendship with a revolutionary Marxist named Karls Korsch, who influences Brecht's views on the Marxist dialectics, especially in his aesthetic practices, which are oriented towards materialist and revolutionary principles. For Korsch, the Marxist dialectics is critical dialectics which aim to criticize and transform the existing bourgeois establishment. Korsch's version of Marxist dialectics ultimately influences Brecht, whether in the aesthetic theories or the theatrical practice (Mumford, 2009).

Despite his Marxist ideology, Brecht was never a part of the communist party in Germany. Further, he disapproved of Hitler's fascism. Along with Walter Benjamin, Karls Korsch, and Hans Eisler, Brecht campaigned on antifascism. This criticism also appears in *Die Dreigroschenoper* and his other works (Wucherpennig, 2010).

Just like Marx, Brecht was reactive to capitalism as it began to thrive in Germany after the country's loss in the First World War and the country became its first democratic state known as the Weimar Republic. Brecht observed how the economic condition during Weimar's government turned into chaos due to the problems in the stock exchange, which subsequently led to unemployment and poverty. On the contrary, the social turmoil was responded by the government, represented by Karl Zörgiebel, by shooting down the demonstrators. Brecht read about the revolution in Marx's books, which inspired him to reform the forms of theatre according to his observations on the social condition at the time (Jaretsky, 2010).

The theatre reform which Brecht initiated does not only concern the form of theatre, which he named epic theatre. In *Das epische Theater*, one of his writings in the anthology *Schriften zum Theater*, Brecht describes epic theatre as a combination of the word 'epic', which refers to Aristotle and theatre in the dramatic form of storytelling. The stage serves as the technical means and the narrative elements

as the bridge in a dramatic performance. Projection, stage transformation using machines, films, and stage equipment are perfected and performed in a particular time, given that it is not an easy task to present the most important experience among humans (Brecht, 2015) "title": "Die Dreigroschenoper", "type": "book" } } , "schema": "https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json" } .

Brecht adds that epic theatre should play a role in the social and political changes. In *Über Politik auf dem Theater* (1971), he wrote further about the concept of epic theatre.

“Es ist nicht genug verlangt, wenn man vom Theater nur Erkenntnisse, aufschlußreiche Abbilder der Wirklichkeit verlangt. Unser Theater muß die Lust am Erkennen erregen, den Spaß an der Veränderung der Wirklichkeit organisieren (Brecht, 1971).”

It is not enough to ask of the theater only insights, revealing depictions of reality. Our theater must arouse the desire to recognize, organize fun in changing reality.

From the passage, it can be concluded that Brecht has a quite specific goal for his theatre. For him, it is not enough for the audience to just search for different outlook and unravel realities in theatre. Brecht's epic theatre must also be able to arouse curiosity and desire for change in the reality. Brecht wants the audience to be active participants, which means not only learning from what is performed in theatre, but also seeking and learning further. Audience is expected to be more critical and have the desire to make a change in the reality.

Brecht's theater reform is related to his Marxist ideology. It is what makes him attempt to make his plays different from the conventional Aristotle plays, which may not aim to encourage critical thinking. Brecht intends to make his epic theatre an instrument of enlightenment (*Instrument der Aufklärung*). In order to achieve that purpose, theatre must be able to initiate a thinking process among the audience. For this reason, Brecht employs the alienation effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*) to develop a more critical attitude to the reality among the audience (Kesting, 1967).

Through *Verfremdungseffekt* (the alienation effect), the audience can take a distance from the

story performed. According to Brecht, only then a new critical thinking can emerge among the audience or readers of the play. In other words, instead of getting carried away in the emotions of the characters, the audience may remain objective and rational in judging the story and the characters. They are expected to stay aware that the story is merely a story, and that what is more important is the rational understanding of the story.

Brecht's reception of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* is influenced by his horizon of expectations in addition to his Marxist background which had become his way of life. His desire to create a new style of theatre as well as to break free from the Aristotle theatre and the intersection with Chinese theatre birthed the epic theatre theory which influenced his distinctive way of responding to *The Beggar's Opera*. In Brecht's hands, the play has a different tone and style from those of Gay's original play. He intends to make a play that can enlighten his audience instead of trapping them in illusions. As a result, he adds other elements that do not exist in Gay's play as well, although some original elements are kept. Both the *Sprechen zum Publikum* scene and the long *Nebentext* are not a part of the original *The Beggar's Opera*, which shows Brecht's novelty or addition in his reception. Another novelty in *Die Dreigroschenoper* is the ending of the story. It in fact contradicts the audience's expectation, as the criminal Macheath ends up being released from his sentence and awarded the royal title in addition to a pension allowance. Brecht also depicts characters such as Macheath and Peachum differently by adjusting them to his play's storyline.

The portrayal of marginalized people in Gay's play, which is renewed in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, is another element that is influenced by Brecht's Marxist ideology. By telling stories about the marginalized, such as beggars, crooks, and prostitutes, Brecht attempts to criticize the economic condition that was affected by post-World War I Germany. His criticisms have made the portrayal of marginalized people in the play have more presence as a way to show their existence.

The first difference is the portrayal of the beggars. In Brecht's play, the beggars have a more important role than in Gay's play. In Gay's play, although the word 'beggar' is part of the main title, the character only appears in the beginning of the play. In the beginning of the play, the beggar

introduces his opera as *The Beggar's Opera* as it has a different form from the original opera. In Brecht's *Die Dreigroschenoper*, the beggars have more exposure and even become central to the storyline, as one of the main characters is a businessman who exploits these beggars. The beggar is represented by Filch who applies for a job as a beggar and has to obtain a license and costume to work as one. The role of the beggars can also be seen when Peachum rallies them to the streets close to the coronation of Queen Victoria. Peachum uses the rally to press the police commissioner, who initially protects Macheath, to arrest him and sentence him to death. This shows the beggars' significant role in Brecht's play as it determines the direction of the storyline.

Another difference is the change in the characters of Peachum and Macheath as criminals in the *The Beggar's Opera*. In Gay's play, Peachum is a criminal with double roles as he sometimes helps the police in catching other criminals. In Brecht's play, Peachum is not a criminal, but a person who exploits the beggars and puts capital over other things. A line by Peachum's wife on how money can rule the world (*Geld regiert die Welt*) shows Peachum and his wife's views on money/capital. The transformation of the character Peachum from being a criminal in Gay's play to being a capital-oriented boss of the beggars in Brecht's play shows Brecht's attempt to deliver his criticism of avaricious people, as represented by the new Peachum.

Likewise, Macheath's character in Brecht's play is different from Macheath in *The Beggar's Opera*. Although in Gay's play Macheath is a notorious leader of the robbers in London, there is no further description presented about his crimes. In contrast, although the character is also the boss of robbers in Brecht's play, Macheath is portrayed as even crueler with detailed account of his crime, including murder, arson, rape, etc. Macheath's motif for his various wrongdoings is none other than capital gain, as he worships money and disregards morality. This can be seen in his line: "First food, then moral." This shows the importance of material gain to Macheath, which makes him ignore moral values. This attitude towards life frees him from any inhibition as he feels no moral responsibilities in committing crime as long as it helps him accumulate wealth. Macheath's lifestyle, which is too centered on money to the point of abandoning all senses of morality, also reflects

Brecht's criticism of capitalism in Germany at the time. The money-centered lifestyles and lack of morality among the characters in *Die Dreigroschenoper* have resulted in various social issues in the society, such as crime, prostitution, and corruption. Brecht's criticism also touches on how two distinct social classes are indeed the product of capitalism which increasingly consumes the life of the society.

The third difference is in the portrayal of the prostitutes which is more detailed in Brecht's play in the scenes that involve the character Jenny, whom Macheath uses to get money from prostitution business. Needing money, Jenny betrays Macheath by telling Peachum about his crimes, which ends in Macheath's arrest. In contrast to the prostitute character which shows her existence in Brecht's play, this portrayal of a prostitute does not exist in *The Beggar's Opera*. Brecht rejects the capital-oriented way of life, which is represented by Jenny, who willingly betrays her friendship with Macheath for money.

By portraying marginalized people in a different way in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Brecht aims to investigate beginning of the social issues deeply, which indeed originated in capitalism. Brecht shows how the capitalistic lifestyle becomes the source of inequality, disparity, and injustice among the German society after the First World War, during which capitalism began to thrive. After the country's loss in the First World War and the reign of the Weimar Republic, German economy was destroyed despite the country's respectable and successful discoveries in science and technology. These discoveries enabled industrialization in Germany, which in turn resulted in the capitalistic lifestyle, dividing the German society into two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (the labor). It was worsened by the economic condition of the German people that had been destroyed after their loss in World War I.

As a Marxist, Brecht perceives the condition as something that does not meet his horizon of expectations, hence the criticism. Brecht expresses his disapproval by portraying marginalized people even more explicitly in *Die Dreigroschenoper* in the style of epic theatre, which invites the audience to think critically in seeing the reality portrayed in the play. By showing the lives of marginalized people in the form of critical epic theater, Brecht intends to show the terrible effects of capitalism on people, resulting

in more marginalized people than the period before capitalism. By providing a bigger space to marginalized people in his play, Brecht reaffirms his criticism of capitalism, which he considers as something that only adds to the social problems in the community and increases the gap between two social classes. The gap will add to more social problems, resulting in more marginalized groups. By creating epic theatre, Brecht hopes that the society will be enlightened after seeing his play. Also, their idea of marginalized people will be strengthened and sharpened as it clashes with the condition of the increasingly divided capitalistic society.

CONCLUSIONS

Brecht's horizon of expectations is what prompts him to write about the marginalized characters in *Die Dreigroschenoper* in a different way from how they are portrayed in *The Beggar's Opera*. In his play, Brecht emphasizes and gives more space to these marginal characters than in Gay's play.

Moreover, Brecht's Marxist background, which becomes his philosophy of life also affects the way he delivers his criticism, which is different from Gay's. Gay criticizes the moral degradation that is caused by the arrogance of the ruling authority in the form of increased crime rate, corruption, and prostitution that are explicitly detailed in *The Beggar's Opera*. Brecht's Marxist ideology also contributes to the difference in the way he expresses his criticism in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, namely by depicting marginalized people as the main characters and giving them exposure as a way to criticize the Weimar Republic. The economic turmoil during the Weimar Period becomes the focal point of Brecht's criticism. He blames the social issues on capitalism which began to thrive in Germany during that time and shows his concern about them in his portrayal of marginalized people in his play.

STATEMENTS OF COMPETING INTEREST

Herewith the author declare that this article is totally free from any conflict of interest regarding the data collection, analysis, and the editorial process, and the publication process in general.

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