

Women as Victims of War in Brecht's "*Mother Courage and Her Children*".

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النساء كضحايا الحرب في مسرحية بريخت "الأم الشجاعة وأطفالها"

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المديرة العامة لتربية نينوى

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Abstract

"*Mother Courage and Her Children*," a captivating play penned by Bertolt Brecht, delves deeply into the harsh realities of war and its devastating effects on individuals, families, and societies. Set amidst the tumultuous backdrop of the Thirty Years' War, the narrative revolves around the protagonist, Anna Fierling, also known as Mother Courage, as she navigates the war-torn landscape with her three children. Brecht masterfully portrays the somber aftermath of war, with a particular focus on the plight of women who find themselves victims of this brutal conflict. This study seeks to analyze the portrayal of women in "*Mother Courage and Her Children*" and examine their experiences as victims of the unforgiving war. In the play, the female characters face unique challenges and vulnerabilities amidst the chaos of battle. Their struggles and sacrifices reveal the complex dimensions of victimhood, extending beyond mere physical harm to encompass deep emotional and psychological scars. The primary objective of this study is to shine a light on the often-overlooked impact of war on women, bringing to the forefront the inherent injustices and systemic violence that persist during times of conflict. Brecht's "*Mother Courage and Her Children*" stands as a stark reminder of the pressing need to address the plight of women caught in the crossfire of war. It calls for advocating a world where the voices of the marginalized are not only heard but also acknowledged and addressed, ultimately striving for a future where the ravages of war on women are rectified with urgency and compassion.

Key words: Brecht, Mother Courage, Women, Violence, War, Children.

الخلاصة

"الأم الشجاعة وأطفالها"، وهي مسرحية أسره صاغها بيرتولت بريخت، تتعمق بعمق في الحقائق القاسية للحرب وآثارها المدمرة على الأفراد والأسر والمجتمعات. تدور أحداث القصة وسط الخلفية المضطربة لحرب الثلاثين عامًا، حول بطل الرواية، أنا فييرلينج، والمعروفة أيضًا باسم الأم الشجاعة، وهي تتنقل في المشهد الذي مزقته الحرب مع أطفالها الثلاثة. يصور بريخت ببراعة العواقب الكئيبة للحرب، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على محنة النساء اللاتي يجدن أنفسهن ضحايا هذا الصراع الوحشي. تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل صورة المرأة في "الأم الشجاعة وأطفالها" وفحص تجاربها كضحايا للحرب التي لا ترحم. في المسرحية، تواجه الشخصيات النسائية تحديات فريدة ونقاط ضعف وسط فوضى المعركة. تكشف نضالاتهم وتضحياتهم الأبعاد المعقدة للضحية، والتي تتجاوز مجرد الأذى الجسدي لتشمل الندوب العاطفية والنفسية العميقة. الهدف الأساسي من هذه الدراسة هو تسليط الضوء على تأثير الحرب على النساء الذي غالبًا ما يتم تجاهله، مما يبرز الظلم المتأصل والعنف المنهجي الذي يستمر في أوقات النزاع. تمثل مسرحية بريخت "الأم الشجاعة وأطفالها" تذكيرًا صارخًا بالحاجة

الملحة لمعالجة محنة النساء العالقات في مرمى نيران الحرب. إنه يدعو إلى الدعوة إلى عالم لا تُسمع فيه أصوات المهمشين فحسب ، بل يتم الاعتراف بها أيضًا ومعالجتها ، وفي نهاية المطاف نسعى جاهدين من أجل مستقبل يتم فيه تصحيح ويلات الحرب على النساء بإلحاح ورحمة. الكلمات المفتاحية: بريخت ، الام الشجاعة، النساء ، العنف، الحرب، الاطفال.

1. Introduction to women as victims of wars.

War can be defined as: "armed conflict between population groups conceived of as organic unities, such as races or tribes, states or lesser geographic units, religious or political parties, economic classes" (Johnson, 1935, P.18). Whereas the critic Bertrand Russell's definition of war as "conflict between two groups, each of which attempts to kill and maim as many as possible of the other group in order to achieve some object which it desires". According to Russell, the primary motivations driving men to engage in conflicts are typically centered on "power" or "wealth" (1916, P.34).

Across historical contexts, women have endured various forms of violence, discrimination, and marginalization during and after wars. The consequences of war on women as victims represent a significant yet often neglected dimension of armed conflicts worldwide. According to "United Nations Population Fund", the profound impact of warfare on the lives and self-esteem of women and girls becomes evident in conflict-affected regions, where they bear an unequal burden of suffering. Their experiences encompass a broad spectrum of challenges, which deeply affect their physical, emotional, and social well-being (2002, P.4).

Throughout history, women have tragically endured the "violence of war", becoming victims of various forms of suffering like "rape", "financial exploitation", and the heartbreaking loss of their lives or families. While "men and boys" can also suffer from wartime violence, it is crucial to acknowledge that "women and girls" are at a higher risk and constitute the majority of survivors (Carpenter, 2006, P. 85). During armed conflicts, women and girls face a wide range of violence, including "physical", and "psychological abuse", inflicted by both state and non-state actors. "Sexual violence", such as "rape", "sexual slavery", "forced marriage", and other forms of abuse, is frequently used as a weapon of war to exert control, instill fear, and degrade not only the individual victims but also their entire communities. Regrettably, women bear a disproportionate burden of these atrocious acts (Rehn, & Sirleaf, 2002, P. 15).

In addition to that, regions affected by conflict, women and girls are exposed to increased vulnerability, making them susceptible to falling victim to "human trafficking networks" (Rehn, & Sirleaf, 16). These exploitative networks subject them to various forms of abuse, such as sexual exploitation, forced labor, and domestic servitude, further exacerbating the hardships they already endure. Moreover, women often encounter significant challenges in accessing justice due to the lack of adequate legal protection. The legal systems in these areas may be compromised or biased, making it difficult to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.

Armed conflicts inflict significant disruptions on essential services like "healthcare and education", which are fundamental for the welfare and progress of families and communities. The devastating impact includes the destruction or inaccessibility of hospitals and clinics, posing a particular threat to women and girls who are then deprived of proper medical care during pregnancy and childbirth. Consequently, the limited healthcare access contributes to elevated levels of maternal and infant mortality (Ekzayez et al., 2021, P. 18). Similarly, "education" suffers greatly during times of war. Schools may be damaged or used for military purposes, leaving girls and young women deprived of the opportunity to learn and develop their skills. The denial of education perpetuates cycles of poverty and inequality, hindering the overall progress of societies (UNAMI/OHCHR, 2021, P. 10). In addition, during times of warfare, the plight of "displacement and refugees" becomes particularly troubling for women and girls, as they form a considerable segment within these affected populations. Seeking safety in unfamiliar territories, they are confronted with heightened vulnerabilities to "exploitation", "trafficking", and violence, amplifying their hardships even further (Dlamini, 2021, P. 4). Amidst wartime, families and community support networks are frequently disrupted, resulting in the tragic loss of loved ones. Women, specifically, can bear the heart-wrenching burden of losing spouses, children, and extended family members, leaving them as single mothers or widows. This predicament leaves them without education, sufficient resources to sustain themselves and care for their dependents adequately (Lindsey, 2001, P. 31).

Furthermore, in warfare, "the psychological impact" of war on women is profound, with far-reaching consequences. Direct exposure to violence or witnessing atrocities can lead to the development of "post-

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)", anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. These women often bear the heavy burden of psychological trauma as a result of the harrowing experiences they endure during times of conflict (Klaric et al., 2007, P.169). In addition to that, in certain societies, women who have endured sexual violence during war may encounter "social stigma" and rejection, exacerbating their feelings of isolation and hindering their reintegration into their communities. Someone has said "If my wife has been raped, I will be scared to sleep with her; I will be scared to death." This added burden of societal judgment can make it even more challenging for these women to rebuild their lives after the trauma they have endured (Kelly et al., 2011, P. 11).

1.1 Women as Victims in Literature.

The depiction of women as victims of war in literature is a significant and complex theme. Numerous authors have delved into this subject, portraying women facing the harsh consequences of armed conflicts. These characters often endure great suffering, trauma, and injustice, providing insight into the profound impact of war on women's lives. As literature reflects society, it has served as a mirror, illuminating the unique hardships experienced by women during times of war.

Throughout history, women have been victims of war, yet their stories have often been overlooked or underrepresented. Literature has played a crucial role in bringing these narratives to the forefront, shining a light on the diverse ways in which women are affected by war. In classic works like Homer's epic poems "*The Iliad*" and "*The Odyssey*," (1581) women are portrayed as victims of the circumstances brought about by war. The devastating physical and emotional toll of war on women is powerfully depicted in works like Anne Frank's diary's "*The Diary of Anne Frank*" (1947) and Alice Walker's novel "*The Color Purple*," (1982) showcasing the profound effects on their bodies and minds.

In fact, war inflicts an immense loss of family members, homes, and communities, and women, being caregivers and providers, often bear the brunt of this loss. Themes of grief, resilience, and the struggle to rebuild life after war are explored in literary works such as Khaled Hosseini's novel "*The Kite Runner*" (2003) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel "*Half of a Yellow Sun*" (2006). Tragically, sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war throughout history, making women particularly vulnerable to such atrocities. Literature, through books like Khaled Hosseini's novel "*A Thousand Splendid Suns*" (2007) and Laurie Halse Anderson's novel "*Speak*," (1999) has been instrumental in drawing attention to this issue and portraying the harrowing experiences of women subjected to sexual violence in conflict zones.

Indeed, war disrupts societal structures and challenges traditional notions of femininity, influencing women's roles and identities in profound ways. Literary works like Bertolt Brecht's "*Mother Courage and Her Children*" (1939), Margaret Mitchell's novel "*Gone with the Wind*" (1936) and Kristin Hannah's novel "*The Nightingale*" (2015) delve into how women navigate these changing circumstances during wartime. Despite their victimhood, women in the literature often display remarkable resilience and courage. They actively resist oppression and play vital roles in rebuilding their communities, as seen in works like Marcus Zusak's novel "*The Book Thief*" (2005) and Deborah Ellis's children novel "*The Breadwinner*" (2017).

Actually, literature serves as a vital platform for marginalized voices, allowing women to authentically share their stories and experiences. By sharing these narratives, literature challenges societal norms, promotes empathy, and advocates for change in how women are perceived and treated during times of conflict. In addition to the mentioned works, numerous works of literature such as Virginia Woolf's novels, including "*Jacob's Room*," (1992), "*Mrs. Dalloway*," and "*To The Lighthouse*," (1927) vividly portray women as devastated victims of war and illustrate gender polarization. In addition, Edward Bond's plays "*The Red-Black Ignorant*" (1990) and "*Great Peace*," (1991) delve into the suffering of women following the nuclear war in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In her 1982 poem "Picture From the Blitz," Lois Clark commemorates British women who endured the loss of their homes while managing the home front during World War II. Additionally, contemporary authors like Helen Benedict with "*Sand Queen*," (2011) and Sara Nović with "*Girl at War: A Novel*" (2015) further explore the hardships faced by women in war. These literary works play a crucial role in shaping the narrative of women as victims of war, shedding light on the immense challenges they endure and the resilience they exhibit in the face of unimaginable suffering and trauma. By telling these stories, literature continues to emphasize the unique and vital perspective of women during times of conflict.

Ultimately, women as victims of war in literature serve as a poignant reminder of the profound impact of armed conflicts on half of the world's population. Through the exploration of their experiences, literature

fosters empathy, deepens our understanding, and calls for action to address the hardships faced by women in war-torn regions. Furthermore, literature serves as a powerful tool to challenge patriarchal systems, advocate for gender equality, and promote efforts in peacebuilding that can prevent future suffering and victimization.

2. Introduction to Brecht's theater.

Bertolt Brecht, born in Augsburg, Germany, from 1898 to 1956, left an indelible mark on the world of theater as a visionary who reshaped our perception of drama. This versatile artist was not only a renowned dramatist but also a skilled poet, theater director, and practitioner. His contributions have earned him the title of the pioneer of a revolutionary theatrical style known as 'epic theatre'. Brecht's innovative approach to performance focused on delivering powerful social and political messages, leaving a lasting influence on both artists and audiences to this day.

Brecht's influence on theater and drama has transcended time, leaving a lasting impact that resonates with playwrights, directors, and theater practitioners around the globe. His innovative theories and techniques remain subjects of study and are actively utilized in contemporary theater and performance art. At the heart of Brecht's theater was the pivotal concept of the "Verfremdungseffekt," or "alienation effect." This technique was devised to intentionally distance the audience from becoming emotionally immersed in the characters and narrative, urging them to maintain a critical perspective. By consistently reminding the spectators that they were witnessing a performance, Brecht aimed to stimulate their reflection on the deeper social and political themes rather than merely being swayed by the characters' emotions. The purpose was to create an intellectually engaging experience, prompting thoughtful contemplation and analysis of the play's underlying messages (Held, 2011, P. 30).

Another distinctive technique in Brecht's theater is Brecht's "Epic Theater", because of its characteristic features, such as the distinctive "episodic structure" and incorporation of diverse elements, like 'songs', 'projections', 'placards', and direct engagement with the audience. This innovative approach enabled Brecht to present a series of interconnected scenes or events, linked thematically rather than following a linear narrative. By diverging from traditional storytelling techniques, he aimed to foster critical thinking and provoke thoughtful reflection on the social and political themes portrayed in the play (Jie & Jianjun, 2013, P.75).

In fact, Brecht's journey as a theater writer began with his role as a reviewer in newspapers before achieving his first play, "*Baal*" in 1918, at the remarkably young age of twenty. Soon after, in 1922, his second play, "*Drums in the Night*," premiered in Munich. Brecht's legacy in the theater world includes renowned works like "*The Threepenny Opera*" (1931), "*Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*" (1938), "*The Life of Galileo*" (1943), "*Mother Courage and Her Children*" (1939), and "*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*" (1944). Brecht's artistic vision was profoundly shaped by the influences of Charlie Chaplin and Karl Marx, infusing his plays with a unique blend of humor and unwavering political convictions. Through their inspiration, he daringly questioned and challenged the traditional "Aristotelian concept" of tragic fate (Flaig, 2010, P.40).

Though Brecht was primarily known as a playwright and not as a poet. However, Brecht's poetic writings served as a potent and versatile medium for expressing his ideas, beliefs, and criticisms regarding the societal, political, and cultural issues of his time. Fearlessly confronting subjects like class struggle, "capitalism", exploitation, the impact of both World Wars, and the "rise of fascism", he delved deep into the complex social changes that shaped Europe during the early-to-mid-20th century, notably the "Nazi era". His poetry, spanning from 1913 to 1956, is thoughtfully compiled in the collections "*Poems 1913-1956*" (1997) and "*Poetry and Prose: Bertolt Brecht*" (2003). Through these poetic works, he aimed to raise awareness, provoke thoughtful contemplation, and challenge the prevailing norms. These compilations provide readers with an all-encompassing perspective on the evolution of Brecht's poetic expression and his reflections on various social, political, and personal themes, making them invaluable glimpses into the mind of this influential artist (Hays, 1945, P.149).

In conclusion, Bertolt Brecht's contributions to the world of theater have been immeasurable. His vision, innovation, and commitment to social and political commentary have not only shaped the evolution of drama but have also inspired generations of artists to use their craft to engage, provoke, and challenge audiences in meaningful ways.

3. The introduction to "*Mother Courage and Her Children*"

"*Mother Courage and Her Children*" is a renowned play penned by German dramatist Bertolt Brecht in 1939, though its first staging took place in 1941. This play occupies a prominent position within Brecht's body of work. The narrative unfolds during the tumultuous Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and revolves around the central character, Anna Fierling, a strong-willed and resourceful woman known as Mother Courage, who operates a canteen-wagon (Summers, 2016, P. 11). True to its structure, "*Mother Courage and Her Children*" is divided into twelve scenes, each representing a year from 1624 to 1636, encompassing the tumultuous period of the Thirty Years' War that ravaged Europe. Bertolt Brecht's approach in this play defies conventional tragedy, as it falls under the genre of "Epic Theatre." In this innovative theatrical form, Brecht employs the deliberate use of an alienation effect to provoke critical thinking and raise social awareness among the audience. By doing so, he consciously discourages emotional identification with the characters and events portrayed in the play. The character of Mother Courage is the central figure in the play, and she is a resourceful, pragmatic, and resilient woman who travels with the army, profiting from the war by selling goods to soldiers. Despite the ongoing violence and chaos, Mother Courage remains determined to secure her own survival and that of her three children, Eilif, Swiss Cheese, and Kattrin. The play explores the effects of war on individuals and the lengths people will go to protect their interests amid the backdrop of an ever-shifting and treacherous landscape. Overall, Brecht's "*Mother Courage and Her Children*" stands as a potent critique of the devastating effects of war on ordinary individuals. It serves as a profound exploration of the human condition, delving into the repercussions of war and the intricate moral dilemmas confronted by everyday people in extraordinary situations. Through his unique storytelling style and implementation of distancing techniques, Brecht skilfully prompts the audience to contemplate the overarching themes of war, capitalism, and the multifaceted nature of humanity (Squiers, 2021, p.66)

4. Women as victims of war in "*Mother Courage and Her Children*"

In "*Mother Courage and Her Children*," women are vividly depicted as victims of war, bearing the weight of tragic consequences and enduring the hardships brought on by the ongoing conflict. The play eloquently showcases the challenges and vulnerabilities faced by women, underscoring the profound impact of war on their lives and the lives of their families. It is widely recognized as the greatest anti-war play of the 20th century, a testament to Bertolt Brecht's vehement detestation of war. For him, war is a hellish experience, and this play stands as his most impassioned and profound denunciation of it. In "*Mother Courage and Her Children*," the relentless struggles, sacrifices, and unwavering resilience of women amid the horrors of war are artfully portrayed. Throughout the narrative, the play powerfully conveys the harsh realities faced by women trapped in armed conflicts, offering a thought-provoking critique of war's destructive nature and its profound impact on innocent lives. By conducting a thorough analysis of each female character, readers are granted valuable insights into their coping strategies amidst the victimization caused by war's violence. This comprehensive study delves into the experiences of the main female characters, illuminating the far-reaching consequences of conflict on their lives and revealing their extraordinary strength and determination amidst the chaos and devastation:

4.1 Mother Courage

Mother Courage, the central character in Bertolt Brecht's play "*Mother Courage and Her Children*," serves as a poignant representation of the devastating effects of war on individuals and families. Throughout the play's twelve-year span, during the Thirty Years' War, Mother Courage endures profound and tragic losses, as her three children meet their demise in different war-related circumstances. Throughout the play, she loses all three of her children to the war. Her eldest son, Eilif, is executed for looting, her daughter Kattrin is killed during a military attack, and her youngest son, Swiss Cheese, is murdered when he refuses to reveal the location of the regiment's pay chest. These devastating losses highlight how war mercilessly robs her of her family and loved ones, making her a victim of the conflict's brutal toll. As a caring and devoted mother, Mother Courage does her utmost to shield her three children from the perils of war. In encounters with the sergeant and other military figures, Mother Courage demonstrates her unwavering commitment to protecting her children from the dangers of war and exploitation. When the sergeant questions her sons' absence from the army, she firmly states that she does not want her sons to become soldiers, saying, "The soldier's life is not for sons of mine!" (MC 20). Her refusal to let Eilif be taken away by the sergeant further emphasizes her protective nature, as she insists, "Let him alone! He's not for you!" (MC 20). Also, Mother Courage's concern for her daughter, Kattrin, is evident when she threatens to report an officer to the colonel for "His lieutenant is courting" (MC 20) her daughter. Additionally, in a desperate attempt to shield Kattrin from the threat of

rape by soldiers, she resorts to rubbing "ashes into Katrin's face"(MC 35), making her less appealing to potential attackers. In addition to that, Mother Courage offers advice to Katrin, cautioning her against getting involved with soldiers romantically. She draws a lesson from Yvette's love story and urges her daughter to be wary of soldiers' advances, "they tell you they worship the ground under your feet – did you wash 'em yesterday, while we're on the subject? – then, if you don't look out, you're their slave for life" (MC 32). Mother Courage goes to great lengths to keep Yvette's influence away from her daughter, Katrin. She fears that Yvette's lifestyle and behavior might serve as a bad example for Katrin, so she describes Yvette harshly and disapproves of any association between them. For instance, she stops Yvette from talking about her friend Peter Piper and "How It All Happened" in front of her "innocent daughter" (MC31). Furthermore, Mother Courage becomes furious when she discovers Katrin wearing Yvette's hat and boots. She immediately demands that Katrin takes them off, fearing that these items might lead her daughter down the same path as Yvette. Mother Courage's concern and disapproval are evident in her words, "They'll make a whore of you" (MC35). She tears Yvette's hat off Katrin's head as a symbolic gesture to distance her daughter from such influences. Not only that, when Mother Courage finds Katrin holding Yvette's red boots, she scolds her, calling her a "shameless little hussy"(MC 36). In fact, Mother Courage's actions and words reflect her deep concern for Katrin's well-being and her determination to protect her daughter from any association with Yvette's lifestyle. Her attempts to shield her daughter from potential dangers and preserve her innocence during the challenging and chaotic times of war. Furthermore, when Swiss Cheese's life is at risk, Mother Courage is willing to go to great lengths to save him. She offers to pay a ransom of two hundred to spare his life, telling Yvette urgently, "Tell him I'll pay two hundred. Run!" (Mc 40). These actions vividly display the depth of Mother Courage's love for her children and her determination to protect them at all costs. However, in the midst of war, even her best efforts cannot shield them from the harsh realities of the conflict. These moments in the play showcase Mother Courage's complexity as a character, torn between her love for her children and the harsh necessities of survival in a war-torn world. In the face of adversity, the valiant Mother Courage finds herself ensnared in the clutches of the capitalist system, instilling fear in her heart towards the prospect of peace. As a victim of economic exploitation, she knows all too well that peace would lead to the loss of her goods and the means of livelihood for her family, as she firmly asserts, "I'm not in love with war [...] My goods [...] I live off them" (MC 59). Mother Courage can be seen as a victim of the capitalist system, which has influenced society to believe that war is more beneficial than peace, as depicted in the speeches of the Sergeant and the Chaplain. The Sergeant emphasizes the perceived flaw of peace, stating, "You know what the trouble with peace is? No organization [...] Peace is one big waste of equipment" (MC 18). On the other hand, the Chaplain advocates for war "satisfies all needs" (MC 50). Both characters highlight how the capitalist system perpetuates the idea that war is necessary for maintaining order and meeting various needs, leading to the tragic consequences faced by Mother Courage and others affected by the relentless cycle of conflict and exploitation. As an unmarried woman with three children and no fixed abode during these turbulent times, the canteen wagon presents a vital lifeline for supporting her family. Mother Courage's unwavering determination to survive in the unforgiving capitalist environment, which preys on vulnerable individuals, is commendable. Choosing to run the canteen becomes a more respectable choice than resorting to desperate measures like prostitution or begging to sustain a livelihood. In this pursuit, she not only ensures her family's welfare and meets their fundamental requirements but also attends to the soldiers' needs during the unrelenting Thirty Years' War. In a world where options are limited, Mother Courage embraces her role with courage and determination, exemplifying the resilience of the human spirit amidst the chaos of war and economic exploitation. Mother Courage, a woman marked by unwavering resilience, becomes a victim of profound moral dilemmas amid the constant financial hardships brought about by the war-ravaged economy. Despite her indomitable determination and strength, she is forced to confront numerous risks to sustain her canteen business, going to the extent of selling goods to both opposing sides. This distressing reality serves as a poignant illustration of the ethical quandaries faced by countless individuals who find themselves ensnared in the intricate economic complexities of war, grappling with the unsettling reality of profiting from the very suffering that engulfs them. Moral quandaries frequently confront Mother Courage, presenting her with difficult choices that often involve compromising her principles to protect her business or deciding between her children's safety and her own economic survival. In the beginning of the play, Mother Courage is seen proudly displaying the Protestant flag, referring to it as "our Protestant flag" (MC 34). However, as the tide of the war turns against the Protestants, she decides to change the flag, remarking, "(taking the flag

down) I've had it twenty-five years. I don't notice it anymore" (MC 35). In a surprising turn, she then takes the Catholic flag from her basket and "raises it up the pole" (MC 37). These actions reflect her adaptability and pragmatism, as she shifts allegiances to align with the prevailing power in order to protect her business and survive amidst the changing tides of the war. These dilemmas serve as poignant illustrations of the moral complexities imposed on individuals by war, where the pursuit of survival may require sacrificing deeply-held values. Mother Courage is indeed a victim of war displacement. The play revolves around her constant travel with the army, which leads to her being uprooted from her home and subjected to a nomadic existence. Mother Courage's life is characterized by constant movement, as she tirelessly follows the army from one battlefield to another with her canteen wagon. In Scene 1 of the play, she introduces herself as "Anna Fierling, known as Mother Courage," (MC 19), highlighting the absence of a fixed abode or permanent residence. Her nomadic lifestyle is further underscored by the fact that she lacks any official licenses or identification papers, not even for her children. In response to the soldier's inquiry about her license, she humorously replies, "My license in the Second Protestant Regiment is an honest face" (MC 19), implying that her survival in this war-torn world depends more on her wits and resourcefulness than on official paperwork. The war's upheaval has uprooted her from any semblance of a stable home or settled life, leaving her in a state of constant displacement and uncertainty. Additionally, Mother Courage's travel exposes her to the dangers of war and its aftermath. She encounters violence, destruction, and death in various war-torn regions. For instance, she witnesses the devastation caused by military attacks and the suffering of civilians caught in the crossfire. This not only adds to her sense of displacement but also highlights the harsh realities faced by those displaced by war. Furthermore, Mother Courage's nomadic lifestyle results in a lack of social connections and emotional attachments. She struggles to form deep and meaningful relationships with others due to the transient nature of her existence. The isolation and emotional distance she experiences due to her displacement are evident throughout the play. In a poignant scene, Mother Courage bares her soul, expressing her deep yearning for a stable life and a sense of belonging for her children. Her longing reveals the profound emotional toll of war displacement on her psyche. To the cook, she confesses, "I'm tired of this wandering life. I feel like a butcher's dog, taking meat to the customers and getting none for myself" (MC 64). Her words reflect the weariness and exhaustion she experiences from the constant movement and lack of permanence. In a moment of vulnerability, Mother Courage shares her dreams of finding a place free from the chaos of war, where she and her remaining children can rest for a while, as she says, "we could find a place where there's no shooting, me and my children – what's left of 'em – we might rest up a while" (MC, 64). She envisions driving through hell with her wagon, selling brimstone, or traversing through heaven, providing supplies to wandering souls. Her yearning for a place without violence and bloodshed reveals her desperate longing for respite from the brutal realities of war. The play's portrayal of Mother Courage's continuous movement and displacement serves as a potent commentary on the devastating impact of war on individuals and communities. It emphasizes the profound challenges faced by those uprooted from their homes, highlighting the disarray and instability war brings to people's lives. Mother Courage's journey becomes a poignant representation of the human cost of conflict, as she searches for a place of safety and peace for herself and her children. The play's portrayal of Mother Courage's emotional struggles underscores the universal effects of war displacement on the human psyche. It serves as a powerful reminder of the immense disruption and trauma war inflicts on individuals, leaving them yearning for stability, security, and a place they can call home. Mother Courage is undeniably a victim of emotional toll throughout the course of the story. The play explores the devastating impact of war on individuals, and Mother Courage's experiences showcase the profound emotional hardships she endures. Her emotional toll is seen in the aftermath of her daughter Katrin's death. She was Mother Courage's beloved daughter, and the two shared a strong bond despite their communication barriers. In last scene of the play, Mother Courage receives the devastating news that Katrin has been killed during a military attack. Upon hearing the tragic news, Mother Courage's emotional distress is evident. She is shattered, grieving the loss of her beloved daughter, and her grief is magnified by her inability to express her emotions openly. Mother Courage's emotional turmoil reaches a heart-wrenching peak when she discovers Katrin's lifeless body after the military attack. In this poignant moment, she is depicted in a state of profound grief and lamentation. Despite the devastating reality before her, she clings to a glimmer of hope, expressing to the peasants that maybe Katrin is not dead, and "Maybe she's asleep" (MC 75). Her desperate desire for her daughter to be alive and her inability to accept the truth underscores the depth of her emotional distress. Throughout her outpouring of grief, she repeatedly emphasizes that she is happy if Katrin is merely sleeping, cherishing any thread of

hope that her daughter might still be alive and safe. The weight of her loss becomes overwhelming, leaving Mother Courage emotionally drained and vulnerable. The emotional intensity of the scene showcases the profound impact of war on her psyche, as she grapples with the pain and sorrow of losing her beloved daughter in such a tragic manner. Her refusal to fully confront the reality of Kattrin's death speaks to the depth of her emotional attachment and the devastation she experiences at the loss of her child. Mother Courage's emotional journey throughout the play exemplifies the toll that war takes on individuals, stripping them of their loved ones and leaving them in a state of profound grief and vulnerability. This powerful portrayal of Mother Courage's emotional turmoil emphasizes the human cost of war and the profound emotional toll it exacts on those caught in its midst. It serves as a poignant reminder of the lasting impact of conflict on individuals' emotional well-being and the immense sacrifices made in the face of war's devastation. In conclusion, Mother Courage is undoubtedly a victim of war in Brecht's play. Her losses, forced compromises, economic exploitation, emotional turmoil, and entrapment in the war zone all showcase the devastating impact of conflict on her life. The play serves as a powerful commentary on the destructive nature of war and its far-reaching consequences on individuals, particularly those like Mother Courage, who are caught in its merciless grip.

4.2 Kattrin

The second female character who experiences victimization in the play is Kattrin. She symbolizes the voiceless and vulnerable victims of war who suffer immensely without the ability to speak out or defend themselves. Her portrayal as a young, innocent, and kind-hearted girl, silenced by a traumatic event she endured during the war, reflects the plight of countless civilians who experience the brutal impact of conflict. Throughout the play, Kattrin's actions and experiences shed light on the harsh realities faced by innocent civilians caught in the midst of war. Despite her inability to speak, she demonstrates incredible courage and compassion, striving to protect her family and others from harm. Kattrin is "terrified and runs away, spilling her brandy. [...] She tries to make him understand the danger he is in" (MC 36). Kattrin's powerlessness becomes evident when she witnesses the attack on her brother Siwss Cheese but is unable to warn him due to her muteness. This tragic incident highlights the frustration and heartache of being unable to help loved ones in times of dire need. In essence, Kattrin's character embodies the silent suffering and resilience of innocent civilians impacted by war. Her lack of speech symbolizes the larger issue of the voiceless victims who endure the consequences of conflict without adequate means to voice their pain or seek assistance. Her story serves as a poignant reminder of the often-overlooked casualties of war and the urgent need to protect and advocate for those who are powerless and marginalized in the face of violence and destruction.

Kattrin, a tragic victim of the violence of war, carries the heavy burden of muteness, a haunting reminder of a traumatic incident during the conflict. The heart-wrenching truth is unveiled by her Mother, who reveals the origins of Kattrin's silence— "her dumbness comes from the war. A soldier stuck something in her mouth when she was little" (MC 52). This assault inflicted upon her at a tender age left her in shock, robbed of her voice, power, and sense of agency, pushing her into a state of isolation. Kattrin's profound despair finds expression through her silence and seclusion, leaving her Mother desperate to understand the turmoil within her daughter's mind. As she said, "I wish I knew what goes on inside her head. She stayed out all night once—once in all the years. I never did get out of her what happened" (MC 53). The details of what transpired during that time remained locked within her, unshared with her Mother. This heartrending account serves as a stark and poignant reminder of the horrors and atrocities civilians, particularly vulnerable individuals like Kattrin, endure during times of armed conflict. Kattrin's life has been marred by the brutal violence of war, as she experienced the unthinkable assault by soldiers, as she appeared with "a nasty wound above her eye" (MC 52), leaving her with a visible scar above her eye and an indelible mark on her soul. The dreams she once held dear of finding peace, love, and starting a family were tragically shattered. Her mother, Mother Courage, grieves the loss of her daughter's hopes for a happy future, "She's finished. How would she ever get a husband now? And she's crazy for children" (MC 53), realizing that the war's cruelty robbed Kattrin of the chance to fulfil her cherished desires, including finding a husband and having children. The incident also takes a toll on Kattrin's social acceptance, as she faces rejection and discrimination from others in the community. The Cook, representing societal norms and prejudices, refuses to allow Kattrin into his bar highlights the stigma surrounding her condition, as he says: "her age? With that scar? [...] The customers wouldn't like it!" (MC 64). Mother Courage's efforts to find her a husband were met with disapproval, emphasizing society's reluctance to accept someone with her visible scar. The Cook's rejection underscores the harsh reality of how

society often marginalizes those with visible scars or disabilities, further isolating Katrin. Mother Courage's anguished cry of "Curse the war!" (MC 53) expresses her deep despair and anger towards the conflict that has wrought such profound suffering on her family. This sentiment resonates with the countless civilians who have experienced the horrors and loss brought about by war. The story of Katrin serves as a poignant reminder of the immense atrocities endured by vulnerable individuals like her during times of armed conflict, shedding light on the lasting scars left on both body and soul. Katrin's final encounter with violence, as she is struck by the soldiers' fire "the soldiers fire. KATRIN is hit" (MC 73), poignantly underscores how war can tragically entangle even the most innocent and compassionate souls. In the play's heart-wrenching climax, Katrin's selfless attempt to warn a town of an impending attack ultimately leads to her untimely death. Despite her efforts to resist the vicious cycle of violence, she becomes a tragic casualty of war, highlighting the relentless and inescapable grip it holds on the lives of innocent individuals. Her character symbolizes the profound helplessness experienced by civilians who find themselves ensnared in the clutches of larger political and military conflicts, unable to evade the far-reaching consequences of war. The portrayal of Katrin as a victim of soldiers' violence sheds a necessary light on the darker realities of war and its devastating impact on civilians, particularly vulnerable women and children. Her story serves as a poignant reminder of the toll war takes on personal dreams and aspirations, showing the barriers it erects to hinder individuals from finding happiness and fulfillment. Katrin's journey echoes the human cost of war, demanding attention and compassion for the countless innocent lives like hers that suffer its harrowing effects. To sum up, Katrin's tragic fate leaves a lasting impression, urging us to confront the profound ramifications of armed conflict on civilian populations. Katrin's unwavering spirit and the injustices she endured serve as a powerful call to action, motivating us to strive for a world free from the horrors of war and its relentless impact on those caught in its path.

4.3 Yvette

In addition to the two previously mentioned female victims, Yvette is yet another female character in Brecht's play *"Mother Courage and Her Children,"* who falls prey to the devastating effects of war. Yvette's story is a tragic one, filled with heartbreak and difficult choices. After being victimized by an enemy soldier who occupied her town, she unexpectedly fell in love with him despite the circumstances. Unfortunately, he did not reciprocate her feelings and left her, revealing that he had multiple relationships, "I didn't even know he'd had another girl before me" (MC 31). This abandonment caused Yvette a great deal of pain and sadness. In her desperation to find him, Yvette made the decision to join the army, hoping it would lead her to him. However, this choice turned out to be a mistake as she acknowledges, "I made the mistake of running after him[...] It's ten years ago now." (MC 32). It appears that her pursuit of him consumed her life for a significant period. Yvette's character serves as a poignant representation of the plight of vulnerable individuals caught in the midst of violence and war. Amid the chaos of the Thirty Years' War, she found herself in a difficult and challenging environment, facing hardships and uncertainties that forced her to make desperate decisions. As a marginalized and vulnerable individual, Yvette's circumstances were particularly harsh. Her involvement in prostitution was not a choice she made willingly, but rather a means of survival in the face of dire circumstances. This line of work exposed her not only to the brutal realities of war but also to societal prejudices and exploitation. Yvette encounters considerable prejudice and mistreatment due to her profession as a prostitute. She faces rejection and isolation from society. In many situations, Mother Courage treats her with condescension and disapproval because of her profession. Yvette's interaction with the Ordinance Officer highlights a potential connection or relationship between them, which Mother Courage dislikes, as says "I don't like that:[...] But the war 's not making a bad start" (MC 30). Throughout the play, Yvette's profound desperation and emotions of abandonment and humiliation are palpable. Society treats her with contempt, rejecting her presence and likening her to a "stinking fish" (MC31). False rumors about her health have spread like wildfire, tarnishing her reputation and causing significant distress and emotional turmoil. In response, Yvette vehemently denies any illness, dismissing the claims as slanderous lies: "Who says I'm sick? That's a libel!" (MC30). She adamantly proclaims, "they're all liars! I'm desperate"(MC31). Yvette's rejection by society causes immense distress and emotional turmoil for her. Her past experiences of betrayal, particularly by her first partner's infidelity, have contributed to her current struggles and sense of desperation. The pain and difficulties she faces lead her to resort to morning drinking as a coping mechanism. Although she acknowledges the potential negative effects of excessive drinking, such as "crow's feet,"(MC31) she sees it as a necessary sacrifice to numb her emotional pain. Reflecting on the hardships faced by people from humble

backgrounds like herself, Yvette recognizes that preserving pride is a luxury they cannot afford. In her position, enduring social prejudice and judgment becomes a way of life, and she implies that they must do whatever it takes to survive, even if it means enduring hardship and humiliation. Using the metaphor of "eating dirt or down you go," (MC31) Yvette vividly describes the tough circumstances she and others like her must face. This metaphor conveys the harsh reality they live in, where they must endure hardships, swallow their pride, and take any measures necessary to survive, even if it means facing humiliation and degradation. In the course of the play, Yvette is a prime example of a woman victimized by war. Her profession makes her susceptible to exploitation and abuse from soldiers and other war participants. She is involved with soldiers who exploit her for their own satisfaction. They view her as a mere object or "remind of someone" (MC 38), exemplifying the dehumanization often prevalent in times of war. Yvette's profession as a prostitute renders her especially vulnerable to exploitation, particularly during wartime. Her livelihood depends on soldiers and other participants in the war, leaving her exposed to mistreatment and abuse. The economic dependence she has on the war machine traps her in a cycle of poverty and peril, making it challenging for her to break free from such circumstances. Like others, Yvette too faced exploitation by Mother Courage. Despite Mother Courage's disapproval of Yvette's profession, she astutely exploits Yvette's relationships to further her own interests. One such example is when Mother Courage cleverly capitalizes on Yvette's connection with the Colonel, pawning her carriage to secure the ransom money needed for Swiss Cheese's release. As she mentions, "Wasn't Yvette here? I just talked with her. She's picked up a Colonel, and she says he might buy her a canteen business" (MC 38). Additionally, Mother Courage seizes the opportunity presented by Yvette's relationship with the One-Eyed to secure Swiss Cheese's release by paying a ransom. In these instances, Mother Courage's actions demonstrate her calculating nature, as she prioritizes her own objectives over any moral qualms she may have regarding Yvette's line of work. The play sheds light on the plight of individuals like Yvette. It serves as a poignant portrayal of the dehumanizing effects of conflict on those who are pushed to the margins, struggling to survive amid the harsh realities of war. Overall, by portraying women as victims of war, Brecht aims to prompt the audience to reflect on the broader implications of armed conflict and the urgent need to address the human suffering it engenders. The play encourages viewers to consider the far-reaching effects of war beyond the battlefield and the necessity of seeking peaceful resolutions to global conflicts.

Conclusion

Bertolt Brecht's play *"Mother Courage and Her Children"* skillfully utilizes the backdrop of the European Thirty Years War to convey his "anti-war," "pro-Marxism," and "anti-capitalist" perspectives. Through the character of Mother Courage, the play vividly portrays the harsh realities of a society deeply affected by war, emphasizing the pressing need for transformative change. By setting the play during the Thirty Years War, Brecht employs his signature "Epic Theater" approach, which aims to present the aftermath of war and expose the destructive nature of capitalism. The play serves as a powerful portrayal of the devastating impact of war on women, illustrating how the system perpetuates inequality, leaving the vulnerable and impoverished in dire circumstances while favoring the wealthy and powerful. In its entirety, *"Mother Courage and Her Children"* serves as a powerful rallying cry, compelling the audience to confront the harsh realities of war, particularly its impact on women and children. The play's depiction of war's grim consequences on vulnerable individuals, especially women and children, serves as a poignant reminder of the urgent need for change. Through Brecht's skillful incorporation of historical material and his adept use of epic theater techniques, the play empowers the audience to gain deep insights into the modern world. It urges them to take action towards fostering a more compassionate, equitable, and socially just society.

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