

Shen Te as an ‘Alter Ego’ of Shui Ta in Brecht’s *The Good Woman of Setzuan*: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT: The paper analyses the main character, Shen Te in the play *The Good Woman of Setzuan* on dealing various works and businesses in the society. The study investigates the attitudes of men towards others in different affairs of the society. It also discusses the understatement of being done on Shen Te. The special emphasis of the paper goes with the performances and excellences of the protagonist performed in the play. The executed services of Shen Te for the gods are not less valuable than that of other people of the society as Shui Ta, the alter ego of herself. Her achievement and humankind should be valued like other members of the society. She should no longer be distressed. Thus, the focal point of the researcher is to examine how the effort and enthusiasm of an individual can be more valuable for having a smooth community to ensure peaceful lives in the world.

KEYWORDS: *Literary Style, Alter Ego, Complex Identity, Frustration, Social Change, Class Struggle*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Good Woman of Setzuan by Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) is considered to be a chefs-d’oeuvre (a masterpiece) in the literary canon of Continental drama. The play comes into the category of Brecht’s parable plays where he manifests his intensive desire to educate audience so that they gain a proper consciousness. On account of the dramatic form of his parable plays, Brecht does not only adopt the parable that appears mainly in a narrative form throughout history, he also combines it with his Epic theatre technique, thus, creating a unique form of parable: the epic parable. The parable puts forth several contemporary issues and problems. To cover the wide gamut of growing content ranging from the commercial society’s ‘modus operandi’ to the conflict between good and evil, Brecht experimented with several styles and approaches.

Continental drama is known for investigation and experimentation with distinctive styles and techniques. Dramatists such as Pinter, Brecht, Beckett, and many others used material which had never been exploited by the playwrights of the well-made play. This material consisted of psychological probes, existential dilemmas, oriental fables, parables and many more unexplored areas of the human mind and personality. Most of these modern dramatists experimented innovative forms and contents combining different genres for its depiction. With Brecht the content also consisted of Chinese fable. The genesis of Brecht’s theatre self-titled, the Epic Theatre –lies in the premise that conventional contemporary theatre was no longer valid to the audience and ‘a new theatre that instructed’ was required (Gallant: 104). The dramatists wished for a theatre where the intellectual abilities of the audience could be vigorously employed and the emotional quotient remained detached.

Theatre was a vehicle of social change for the German dramatist, director and poet Bertolt Brecht. In his own words:

“I wanted to take the principle that it was not just the matter of interpreting the world but of changing it, and apply that to the theatre.”

He emphasized and succeeded in propounding the same objective rules for living that Wedekind preached:

“Rules based on undeniable truth that reality is a flux which life can come to terms with only by virtue of its plasticity, its capacity to accommodate. The star performers in the circus of existence are those with limbs of rubber; tragic moments do not leave them crushed but merely endow them with an added appreciation of the absurdities with which they have to contend” (Spalter: 72).

In Brecht's works the desire to caricature always yielded at substantial junctures to the desire to enunciate existential misery. He gave to the world of theatre an impressive body of writing, a new method of producing and acting plays, and a theory of drama to the literary canon. After his death in East Berlin (14 Aug. 1956), his theatrical work was carried forward by Berlin Ensemble am Schiffbauerdamm, where Brecht's widow Helen Weigel guarded the techniques and policies which Brecht developed for modern stage production.

The Good Woman of Setzuan (1938-41), is different type of play written by German playwright Bertolt Brecht. He is widely considered to be one of the most important figures in Twentieth Century literature. An acclaimed poet and is best known as a playwright and director. His "epic theatre" revolutionized the theatre by creating radical breaks from traditional literary and theatrical form. These radical breaks were done in an effort to facilitate radical social change. It represents the modern society life style of modern people. Brecht is deservedly more famous for his epic theatre, where many of his philosophical ideas are worked out in a more subtle and more engaging manner than in his plays. One extended into the highest reaches of French intellectual and political life and brought him fame and honors, including the 1957 Nobel Prize for literature.

Brecht coined the term Epic theatre to enunciate the modern practical techniques and theatrical methods he expounded. Historically, Erwin Piscator pioneered 'Epic theatre. However it was Brecht who perfected the form. Piscator observed, "the epic theatre was invented by me primarily in production and by Brecht primarily in script". Thus the term did not originate with Piscator, although it is generally applied to his work today. In 1926 Brecht used it for the first time. The dramatist maintains:

"When the human being must be grasped as the totality of social relationships, only the epic form can enable the dramaturgist to find a comprehensive image of the world. The new dramaturgy must acquire a form which will not make use of throbbing suspense, but will have the suspense in the relationships of its scenes which will charge each other with tension. This form will therefore be anything but a stringing together of scenes such as we find in revues" (Bentley: 217).

In Epic theatre Brecht employs certain theatrical patterns that are now termed as 'Brechtian'. Their foremost function is to disrupt the flow of the narrative. As a result the audience does not empathize through responses, but gets the opportunity to question and examine what is witnessed onstage. The new techniques, and the novel theatre conventions include songs, music, title, pastiche, anti-illusionist affects, montages resulting in a style which was "presentational as opposed to representational one" (Gallant: 404).

The Good Woman of Setzuan written during Brecht's exile in Scandinavia tells the story of Shen Te, a young woman forced into prostitution by poverty who is rewarded handsomely after opening her home to three visiting gods. Disproving their contention that no goodness still exists on earth, Shen Te is given a small business by the deities, and from there she struggles to work honestly and to provide for the needy, earning her the moniker, "the Angel of the Slums." After falling victim to unscrupulous neighbors and a dishonest lover, however, Shen Te is forced to create an alter-ego — that of her business-savvy cousin, Mr. Shui Ta. Where Shen Te trusts, selfless, and naive, Shui Ta is fierce, manipulative, and efficient. As inevitably happens in Brecht's drama — and, by extension, in our world — the forces of capital and history eventually overwhelm Shen Te, and she is forced to surrender her goodness or starve: Ignoring for a moment the complete lack of content here (and the misplaced modifier and the wretched abuse of adverbs), I have to take aim at that opening sentence: The chief end of Brecht's project, in fact, is to strip us (violently, if necessary) of any and all illusions of "timelessness." Timelessness (like the traditional theatre), he would argue, is a bourgeois daydream — the shiny gloss that covers over the workings and exploitations of capital. To free us of those illusions, to expose that machinery, he distances us from the action, never allowing us to identify too closely with the characters or to suspend our disbelief.

Brecht regularly used aesthetic devices (that are taken into account separately in more details later in this chapter) such as the actors' direct address to the audience as narrator; placards and other forms of writing which breaks the story line. Critical commentary on the action; songs exhorting the audience to question; the stage performance itself; flooding of the stage with harsh white lights regardless of actual action, keeping the stage in full view of the audience, use of minimal props and intentional songs interrupting the action at key junctures are some significant methods employed by him to break audience identification. Brecht demands from his actors not Realism and role identification but an objective style of acting, similar to the detachment expected from the spectators gathered in theatre. Consequently the audience experiences a twin perception of involvement and detachment which is termed as "Alienation". Brecht observes that Alienation or 'Verfremdungseffekte' is not just breaking of illusion, but also:

“... is a matter of detachment, of reorientation: exactly what Shelley wants when he wrote that poetry 'makes familiar objects to be as if they were not familiar', or Schopenhauer when he exclaimed that art must show 'common object of experience in a light that is at once clear and unfamiliar (Willett: 177). Brecht sought to replace illusion, magical effects, trance and sentiments with rationality, vivacity, grace and transparency. The spectators find the illusion of "spontaneous, transitory, authentic, unrehearsed events" (Willett: 79).

The *Verfremdungseffekt* takes a variety of forms: productions of Brecht's dramas often include projected slides above the stage that directly contradict or comment on the action beneath; characters occasionally address the audience directly; and in *Good Woman of Setzuan* Shen Te becomes Shui Ta simply by slipping on a mask that, in most productions, is deliberately unrealistic, deliberately theatrical. We're never allowed to forget that we're only watching a play. Shen Te isn't destroyed by timeless forces of evil or by fate or Providence, but by specific economic systems. Before coming to the University of Alberta for graduate studies in theatre design, Cory Sincennes graduated from Carleton University with an undergraduate degree in Architecture. Cory is the designer in residence with the Edmonton-based Surreal So Real Theatre and his recent professional theatre design work includes Grumplestocks *The Good Woman of Setzuan* is also the thesis production for MFA Theatre Voice Pedagogy candidate, Thrasivoulos (Thrasso) Petras, who is working as voice, speech and text coach for the show. *The Good Woman of Setzuan* portrays the struggle to be good while living in a deceitful society, and the delicate balance needed to survive within it. Throughout the book, it clarifies that it is intricate to be a good person like Shen Te, and that is why she needs Shui Ta to protect herself from the neighbors. Brecht simply sends us a message that human beings are utilizing each others for his/her own sake, alive with abhorrence, and selfish.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bertolt Brecht is widely considered to be one of the most important figures in Twentieth Century literature. An acclaimed poet, he is best known as a playwright and director. His 'epic theatre' revolutionized the theatre by creating radical breaks from traditional literary and theatrical form. These radical breaks were done in an effort to facilitate radical social change. The first and perhaps foremost is Willett's edited collection of Brecht's essays, *Brecht on Theatre* (Brecht & Willett: 1992). Brecht attacked the set rules of the Aristotelian theatre form which move the audience to the state of trance. The difference between the two dramatic forms is, as the dramatist himself points out, Aristotelian plot is supplanted by epic narrative; spectators are no more passive recipients, Brecht intends them to observe and participate. Reason has an important role to play while emotions and instincts do not find place in Epic Theatre. Linear and logical development of events as propounded by Aristotle is replaced by circular structure. The theatre ceased to be a mere source of entertainment as Brecht used it for edifying purposes also and did not ignore the idea of amusement altogether. This collection was in Willett's words, "meant to give English language readers the main texts and set these in chronological order" (Brecht & Willett: 1).

Some of the writings are complete and polished essays that were published during Brecht's lifetime and others are incomplete sketches and fragments. In this volume we see Brecht theorizing on pedagogies, ideology and truth, Fascism, historical materialism and other cultural and social themes. Like *Brecht on Theatre* this collection is also arranged chronologically, covering the years 1914-56. Because the third and final edited collection of Brecht's theoretical writings available in English are *Brecht on Film and Radio* (Brecht & Silberman: 2000). Brecht also left behind two collections of his private writing, both of which are available in English. The first is a diary (Brecht, Ramthun & Willett: 1979) written just after Brecht's experience as a medic in World War I which covers the years 1920-22. The second collection of Brecht's private writings is what has come to be known as his work journal (*Arbeitsjournal*) (Brecht, Rorrison & Willett: 1993) written between 1934 and 1955. Brecht was quite forward that the basis of his plays was Marxist. It is also clear that he meant for this philosophy to be thoroughly enmeshed with the form of the art he produced (Martin & Bial: 24-80). In this way, then, his artistic works can also be seen as philosophical sources. The positions and thoughts he embedded in them are available for unraveling—an endeavor undertaken in the case studies of his plays provided. In order to build the theoretical framework needed to conduct the present scholarship, several sources were of special importance. However, this work has by and large been limited to formalistic approaches (Squiers & Roessler: 2011).

III. THE EVENSTS OF THE GOOD WOMAN OF SETZUAN

While writing dialogues Brecht was very specific about the suitable *gestus*. He coerced the actors to adopt correct tone, movements and stance. Brecht was well versed in this gesture language (*gestische sprache*). His contrapuntal construction of sentences, fine and delicate rhythms, artfully placed pauses, their biblical correlation and sudden changes in intonation compel the speaker to follow the author's objective and to act as he

utters them. The play begins with a monologue by Wong, the water seller. He explains to the audience that he has heard that a few of the highest-ranking gods are on their way to the city of Setzuan. They have heard the people of the world complaining about life, so they are coming to deal with it. He is waiting at the gate of the city to greet them when they arrive. Soon, the three gods appear and Wong recognizes them immediately. He tries to find them a place to stay, but everyone keeps rejecting them. Finally, Shen Te the prostitute agrees. Before they leave the next morning, she asks them how to live a good life and still make ends meet; they have no answers. She complains to them that she cannot afford to live, so after conferring with each other, the gods decide to give her money. They explain they are only paying their "hotel bill," and then they leave.

Scene 1 begins with a monologue by Shen Te, explaining to the audience that after the gods gave her money, she bought a tobacco shop from Mrs. Shin. Mrs. Shin enters and demands that Shen Te give her some rice and money; by the end of the scene, Shen Te has been made to feel guilty and help an entire family in addition to Mrs. Shin. A carpenter enters and demands a hundred silver dollars for the shelves he installed in the shop while Mrs. Shin owned it. When Shen Te asks him to have patience, he starts to take the shelves back. The wife suggests that Shen Te let her "cousin" settle the affair when he arrives, inventing the character of Shen Te's cousin on the spot. Mrs. Mi Tzu, the landlady, demands references from Shen Te, and since Shen Te has none, she goes along with the wife's lie about her cousin who does not exist. She names him Shui Ta, and the wife, husband, and nephew all chime in to support her lie. Scene 2 begins with the arrival of Shui Ta. It is just Shen Te disguised as a man. He fools the family that has been staying in the tobacco shop, even though they know they invented this character. He tells them to leave, and bargains with the carpenter about the price of the shelves and with Mrs. Mi Tzu about the rent she is demanding.

As Scene 3 begins, Yang Sun, described as "a young man in rags," is contemplating hanging himself in a park. He is an unemployed pilot. Shen Te enters and notices that he is about to hang himself with a rope. It starts to rain, and Shen Te takes shelter under the tree with him; they are immediately infatuated with each other. In Scene 3a, Wong is asleep in the sewer pipe where he lives. The gods appear to him and he reports that he has seen Shen Te and that she is still good; she proved it to him when she bought his water even though it was raining. He tells the gods that Shen Te loves someone (presumably Yang Sun) and that she is "doing good deeds all the time." However, it is clear to the gods that her good deeds are unsustainable. When Wong tells them about her "cousin," Shui Ta, they get angry that he has not paid the carpenter what he owes and say he must never visit Shen Te again.

Scene 4 begins with an altercation between Mr. Shu Fu, the barber, and Wong, who has been trying to sell water to Shu Fu's customers. Shu Fu chases Wong out of his shop and hits his hand with a hot curling iron, burning it badly. Many people witness it, but when Shen Te returns and asks if they will be witnesses for him, they say no. The old woman who owns the carpet shop next door with her husband offers to loan Shen Te two hundred silver dollars so she can pay her rent. Mrs. Yang, Yang Sun's mother, enters and tells Shen Te that her son has been offered a job from the director of the airfield in Peking, but that he needs to pay five hundred silver dollars for it. Shen Te pledges to try to help Yang Sun. In Scene 5, Yang Sun enters and interacts with Shui Ta, having no idea he is actually talking to his lover, Shen Te. He demonstrates that he has no interest in Shen Te's financial well-being or her ability to pay the old couple back; he just wants to get to Peking to fly again. After Shui Ta has agreed to sell the tobacco, Yang Sun reveals that his plan is to betray Shen Te. Mr. Shu Fu enters and tells Shui Ta that he would like to offer Shen Te the run of some cabins on his property and other gifts so that she can continue being kind to everyone. Wong and the policeman enter, and Shui Ta betrays Wong (but tells the truth) in saying that his cousin was not present at the time of the assault with the curling iron. Yang Sun returns and Shu Fu tells him that he and Shen Te are about to announce their engagement. Just then, Shen Te emerges from the back room. When Yang Sun reminds her of how he loves her, she chooses to ignore the horrible things he said about her, and agrees to marry him. In Scene 5a, Shen Te explains to the audience that the old woman had to ask for her two hundred silver dollars back, since the anxiety of having loaned them made her husband ill. She said she would. Scene 6 is set in "the 'private dining room' on the upper floor of a cheap restaurant in a poor section of town." Shen Te is there with her wedding guests. Yang Sun and Mrs. Yang, his mother, are removed from the crowd and have a secret conversation in which Yang reveals to his mother that Shen Te has said she cannot sell the shop for him because of the loan from the old couple; he doesn't want to marry Shen Te now. Without the rest of the money, Yang Sun will not marry her. They decide to wait another fifteen minutes for Shui Ta. At this point, Shen Te tells Yang Sun that Shui Ta will not bring the three hundred silver dollars, since he told her that Yang Sun bought only one ticket to Peking, revealing that she knows about the conversation he had with her "cousin" the day before. Yang Sun shows her two tickets; he tells her that they will have to leave his mother behind. However, the wedding has been postponed too long and the priest leaves, followed by all the other wedding guests. In Scene 6a, the gods visit Wong in a dream again, and he asks them to intervene in Shen Te's life. They refuse.

As Scene 7 opens, Mrs. Shin and Shen Te are taking the washing off the clothesline. Mr. Shu Fu enters and hands Shen Te a blank check, explaining that he wants to support her so she can continue being good. Shen Te feels her belly and realizes that she is, in fact, pregnant. Wong enters with one of the carpenter's starving children. Shen Te reveals to Wong that she is pregnant, but asks him not to tell Yang Sun. The wife and husband who had previously taken advantage of Shen Te enter dragging tobacco sacks; Shen Te agrees to put them in the back room. Shen Te leaves and returns dressed as Shui Ta. Shui Ta says that all the people may only stay in Shu Fu's cabins if they work for Shen Te. Mrs. Mi Tzu enters and Shui Ta tells her that he has decided not to sell the shop after all. As Shui Ta leads the group of new workers back to Shu Fu's cabins, Mrs. Shin realizes that Shen Te and Shui Ta must be the same person. Scene 7a takes place in Wong's sewer. He tells the gods that he has had a nightmare about Shen Te and asks them to help her, but they refuse, saying that helping Shen Te would only create more problems and would be too much work for them.

Time has passed before the beginning of Scene 8; Mrs. Yang reveals this to the audience, explaining that Shui Ta has given her son new motivation and a job in the tobacco factory. By now, he has been promoted to foreman. More time has passed before Scene 9, and now Shui Ta is quite fat (because Shen Te is pregnant). Mrs. Shin tells him that the old couple has lost the carpet shop because the repayment of the 200 silver dollars came too late. Then she reveals to Shui Ta that she knows he is the same person as Shen Te, and that "he" is pregnant. Wong enters and reveals that it has been six months since Shen Te has been at home. In front of Yang Sun, he tells Shui Ta that Shen Te is pregnant. Shui Ta leaves and Yang Sun assumes that Shui Ta has sent his cousin away so that Yang Sun would not discover her pregnancy. Shui Ta goes into the back room and sobs loudly; Yang Sun overhears it and thinks that it is Shen Te. This eventually leads to Shui Ta's arrest concerning Shen Te's mysterious disappearance. Scene 9a takes place in Wong's den. The gods visit him there for the last time; they are clearly distressed and fatigued. They set off to find Shen Te to make sure she stays good. She is their only hope. Chapter 10 is set in a courtroom. The policeman introduces the judges, who are the three gods. After testimonies for and against him, Shui Ta begins to cave in and tells the judges to clear the courtroom so he can make a confession. When the courtroom is cleared, Shui Ta reveals to the gods that he recognizes them and that he is, in fact, Shen Te. After she has explained why she had to take these measures, the first god chooses to be in denial about it. He says that Shen Te is still good, though the other two gods insist that he did not hear a word she said and that he is ignoring the fact that she committed bad deeds while disguised as Shui Ta. The gods exit, singing "The Trio of the Vanishing Gods on the Cloud" as Shen Te's cries for help interrupt them. Brecht added the epilogue after the rest of the play; it can be spoken either by Shen Te or by Wong. In the epilogue, it is acknowledged, "A nasty ending was slipped up on us;" the play has ended with no satisfactory conclusion and it must be frustrating to the audience. So the audience is implored to "write the happy ending of the play!" They must figure out for themselves how to reconcile goodness in a world where it apparently cannot exist.

IV. SHEN TE AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

The Good Woman of Setzuan suggests that a society's morality is determined by its economic systems. This theme is introduced in the prologue. When Shen Te complains to the gods, "But everything is so expensive, I don't feel sure I can do it!" the second god responds, "That's not our sphere. We never meddle with economics." However, the first god immediately contradicts him and they decide to give her some money to make it easier for her to be good. This irony blurs the distinction between the morality of "goodness" that the gods are searching for and economics.

In Scenes 7 and 8, Shui Ta creates a new kind of "goodness" for Shen Te to live by, employing those people who had come to expect free handouts from his "cousin." Being forced to work to earn his keep in Shu Fu's cabin seems to transform Yang Sun from "a dissipated good-for-nothing into a model citizen," as his mother puts it.

It is clear in Scene 9 that Shui Ta has let economic success get the best of him. He is called "The Tobacco King of Setzuan," since he has continually expanded the small tobacco shop into a huge factory system. He has turned Shen Te's "goodness," which was a weakness, into economic success, which is strength. This value is in accordance with the theme of Historical Materialism. The theme of Historical Materialism is evident in Scene 10, when Mr. Shu Fu testifies on behalf of Mr. Shui Ta. He tells the judges, "Mr. Shui Ta is a businessman, my lord. Need I say more?" The first god answers, "Yes." This is because economics make no sense to the gods; it is not their realm.

"If conflict is the heart and stuff of drama", then critics regard *Good Woman* as "the most dramatic of Brecht's works". The main idea is the conflict between good and evil, principles and practicality, instinct and reason symbolized by Shen Te's split personality, her dual role as Shen Te and Shui Ta. The play literally translated is the good 'person' of Setzuan. The reason perhaps is that the main character is a woman who later disguises herself as a man. Brecht calls it a parable and specified that the province of Setzuan is any generic city

where virtuous and morally upright people are exploited by others. Shen Te, a prostitute is given enough money by the Gods as reward for her kindness to start a reasonably humble business. But to safeguard herself from parasitic humans taking advantage of her kindness she wears a mask of a male ruthless cousin Shui Ta. Phallus is a symbol of power. She too feels empowered with her declaration to society that she is a man. Androgeneity is considered to be the best form of existence in the contemporary mindset. It can be taken to be symbolically distinct from biological reality. Masculinity in this case is not proven by any sex determination. The society is not anxious about ascertaining it. Just hawkishness and violence in tone, behavior and gestures qualities ascribed masculine aspect of human species creates a blanket of protection for her. Her male attire helps her to get rid of those parasites. Thus Esslin points out, reason and emotions are two contradictory aspects of the same personality and it is hard to survive with undue generosity. Thus “the ruthless hard-boiled, rational part of human nature must take command”, says Esslin (252).

V. PATRIARCHAL CAPITALISM AND SHEN TE

In order to be a true capitalist capable of getting what she wants, Shen Te must “become” Shui Ta, a male alter ego. The issue of gender comes to the forefront during Scene 4, when Yang Sun interacts with Shui Ta in a completely different manner than that in which he interacts with Shen Te. Shui Ta defends his cousin (himself) by saying, “She is a human being, sir! And not devoid of common sense!” However, Yang Sun answers, “Shen Te is a woman: she is devoid of common sense. I only have to lay my hand on her shoulder, and church bells ring.” Scene 4a, which consists of “The Song of Defenselessness,” demonstrates the theme of Patriarchal Capitalism. Shen Te sings first with Shui Ta's mask in her hand, then as Shui Ta, with the mask on. The first part of the song is an appeal to the gods, pointing out that “even the gods are defenseless” and asking, “Why don't the gods to the buying and selling”? As Shui Ta, she is more cynical: “You can only help one of your luckless brothers / by trampling down a dozen others.” In Scene 6, when Shen Te is planning to marry Yang Sun, it is revealed that the marriage will not happen without Shui Ta's presence (which is, of course, impossible). This is because Yang Sun believes Shui Ta will sell Shen Te's tobacco shop in order to get Yang Sun the money he needs to fly again. When Shen Te tells him that she has promised the money to the old couple to repay the loan they gave her, Yang Sun retorts, “And since you always do the wrong thing, it's lucky your cousin's coming.”

VI. GOODNESS IN SHEN TE

The theme of “goodness,” which seems so simple in the title, is revealed as multi-faceted right from the beginning of the play. While Wong runs off to find a house that will welcome the gods for the night, the gods confer among themselves about how their mission to find a good person is failing. The second god says, “People just aren't religious anymore, let's face the fact. Our mission has failed!” The third god, reading from the resolution they are trying to follow, defines good people as those “living lives worthy of human beings.” This definition is vague, since it is unclear what exactly a human being is worth. The gods reveal a bit more about their definition of “goodness” in Scene 1a, during their interaction with Wong. They ask him to find Shen Te and “show interest in her goodness - for no one can be good for long if goodness is not in demand.” This reveals that they recognize how difficult it is to be good without support from others. However, Shen Te provides her own support, in the form of her invented cousin, Shui Ta. When the carpenter asks him to call Shen Te because “she's good,” Shui Ta answers, “Certainly. She's ruined.” The old woman is a candidate for a “good” person, and Shen Te recognizes that when she offers to lend her money to pay her rent. Shen Te says, “I wish the gods could have heard what your wife was just saying, Mr. Ma. They're looking for good people who're happy - and helping me makes you happy because you know it was love that got me into difficulties!”

“Goodness” as a theme is addressed in Scenes 6 and 6a by Yang Sun and by the gods, respectively. The Song of St. Nevercome, sung by Yang Sun, reveals that he believes it is futile to try to be “good.” He sings sarcastically, “Oh, hooray, hooray! That day goodness will pay!” and describes the day that will never come as when “all men will be good without batting an eye.” To him, this day is unachievable. The gods cite goodness as strength, telling Wong that they cannot intervene in Shen Te's life because “The good man finds his own way here below! The good woman too.” When Shen Te realizes she is pregnant, her perception of goodness changes as well. She sees the carpenter's child digging in the trash and realizes her son will come into this kind of world. She sings and it is unclear whether anyone else hears the song. She sings, “To be good to you, my son / I shall be a tigress to all others / If I have to. / And I shall have to.” With this resolve, she will stand up for her own property as Mr. Shui Ta. When the gods appear to Wong in Scene 9a, they reveal how little goodness they have found in the world. Shen Te is the only person who has “stayed good,” and Wong draws attention to the fact that she has not even done that. The third god concludes that, “Good intentions bring people to the brink of the abyss, and good deeds push them over the edge.” The gods have discovered that it is impossible to be “good” in accordance with their rulebook. When the courtroom is later empty, Shui Ta reveals that he is just Shen Te, disguised. Shen Te then tells the gods, “Your injunction / To be good and yet to live / Was a thunderbolt.” It was

impossible for her to be good to others and herself at the same time. The first god refuses to hear that Shen Te did bad things disguised as Shui Ta, instead congratulating her for remaining good. They leave without changing anything; Shen Te still has the same problems and still struggles to be good.

VII. THEMATIC VIEW OF *THE GOOD WOMAN OF SETZUAN*

Shen Te and Shui Ta appear alternately on stage. When Shui Ta appears on the scene, Shen Te is said to be out on some trip. In her absence he manages her affairs and dealings by establishing a tobacco factory where Yang Sun is given a job. Wong keeps the Gods informed about Shen Te. The long absences and lack of news of Shen Te's whereabouts worry both Wong and the Gods. They suspect Shui Ta of murdering her. Shui Ta is taken into remand and tried in the court where the gods are the judges. To prove his innocence he un.masks himself and reveals his real identity as a disguised Shen Te. The underlying moral of the story is that it is impossible to survive in this world with kindness and liberality. Only under the appearance of insensitivity and unkindness "the good woman" is able to survive with her unborn child. This anti-moral statement has a desired effect on the audience and they become conscious of their complacent state. The end of the play presents Shen Te yearning for attention and the Gods avoiding the issue maintaining that she would manage. They are presented as inept, feeble and powerless. Having found one good person in the world that would keep the world going they ascend to the heavens. The play concludes with an earnest call of the dramatist that if the "good" cannot survive then the world has to be changed.

The present analysis takes into account the 1948 translation of the German version by Eric Bentley. He translated the play thrice with slight variations in each edition such as difference in dialogues and endings. Moreover the original German play is different from the three translations. But for this version, Bentley says in the introduction to "Parables for the Theatre", "the present Good Woman adheres far less closely to *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*" (Brecht: 18). In order to explicate his themes, Brecht employs a pastiche of techniques to this play. Retaining the aesthetics of drama the playwright starts the play with the conventional technique of prologue. But unlike the conventional one, this prologue involves more than one character: Wong, the water seller; the three Gods; and Shen Te, a prostitute. Following the tradition it (prologue) states the theme of the play: "Gods descend to look for the good person" and manifests Brecht's desire of changing the world: "the world must be changed because no one can be good and stay good." (Brecht: 23) The stage directions provide no suggestion of special decor or ornamentation on stage. The prologue begins with Wong's direct address to the audience. The "direct address to audience" is a major alienation device which is most frequently used by the dramatist, and the actor is an important instrument that creates the same. In order to break the imaginary fourth-wall, he is made to speak directly to the audience. In terms of context these direct addresses include the actor's reflections on the action that precedes his speech. Not only Wong but other characters like Shen Te, Shui Ta, Shu Fu, Mrs Sun, and Yang Sun also come out of the character to interact with the audience and instead function as narrator-participants to break the trance-like state of the onlookers. At certain instances the address to audience is such that it seems woven into the dialogue. This furnishes the play with an effect of improvisation which can be seen in the following dialogue:

"WONG(to the audience): They gave me such a look when I picked up my cup just now. (Brecht: 24)
SHEN TE. They put me up when I first came in from the country. (To the audience) of course, when my small purse was empty, they put me out on the street, and they may be afraid I'll do the same to them. (To the newcomers, kindly) come in, and welcome, though I've only one little room for you – it's behind the shop." (Brecht: 29)

In the above exchange Shen Te does not refer to a particular situation in which she is addressing nor does she name the person to whom the speech is addressed. She speaks in an abstract manner and suddenly turns to the audience. In another instance the situation is inverted. Yang Sun interacting with audience abruptly starts conversing with Shen Te:

"YANG SUN (with loud conviviality): And now, friends, before the wedding gets under way, I have to ask the bride a few questions. I've no idea what kind of wife she'll make, and it worries me. (wheeling on Shen Te) For example, can you make five cups of tea with three tea leaves?" (Brecht: 73)

The real essence of Brecht's writings lies in unrelentingly varying inventiveness which he mixes with his techniques. He embellished them with pseudo Shakespearean blank verse, classical hexameters, formal prologue and epilogue, music and lyrics, pastiche of prose and poetry, and rhymed and unrhymed verses. His compositions are a blend of Expressionism, Symbolism, and Surrealism and other doctrines. Eventually, it can be said that Brecht is successful of clarifying as a critique of capitalism and as a socialist playwright, as *The Good Woman of Setzuan* interrogates whether it is possible to be good and remain good in an evil society.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Brecht had an aversion for Aristotelian drama which, according to him attempts to create pity and fear among the playgoers to purge their emotions so the spectator leaves the theatre relaxed and refreshed. Aristotelian drama attains this empathy by creating before the spectator an illusion of real incidents and inviting near identification with the protagonist which reaches a level of complete self-oblivion. These enchanting effects of stage illusion enthrall the audience into a dream-like state which Brecht regarded as “physically disgusting and downright obscene” (Esslin: 123). The research paper thus provides an example of how philosophical meaning can be expressed and extracted from literary and dramatic works. This is achieved through the studies of *The Good Woman of Seatzuan* presented in character, Shen Te. Her attitude allows for new and different types of questions to be raised. As a result, the standpoint of the research paper is demonstrating the value of Shen Te’s works might support to the idea of goodness for the betterment of the world.

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