

The Technique of Blended Illusion in Brecht's Caucasian Chalk Circle

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Abstract

This article draws on the cognitivist notion of *blending* to reexamine the theory of alienation effect as illusion and emotion destroyer in Brecht's Epic Theater. The model established in this study illustrates the relationship between the blended illusion in Brecht's theater and the spectators' complex cognitive and emotional activities in the mental spaces. It shows that blending facilitated by the alienation effect through insertion of the conscious with the subconscious expands the spectators' mental spaces for imagination and thus enhances illusion and emotion, instead of eliminating them. By dissecting the 'anti-illusionist' and alienating elements in Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, such as prologue, Singer, his audience addresses, and his communication with characters such as Grusha and Governor, this study shows that the alienation effect serves indeed as an illusion and emotion intensifier. Brecht's Chalk Circle play achieves enhanced illusionist and emotional effects by merging the 'theatrical' illusion with the dramatic one in theater, which in turn facilitates the blending in spectators' mental spaces. This complex blending process in Brecht's theater leads to spectators' intensified identification with *dramatis personae* directly and through 'theatrical' mediation with the latter indirectly.

Keywords: blended illusion, dramatic illusion, theatric illusion, cognitive mediation, emotion

1. Introduction

In addition to 'non-Aristotelian' or 'nondramatic' theater (Brecht, Sz73), Brecht's plays, especially those of early years, were also often referred to by Brecht critics as 'anti-illusionist' (Kesting 57-105; Kämmerer) or 'rationalist' (Savin162-74) theater that banished trance, illusion, intoxication, identification, and vicarious emotions; and replaced them by lucidity, critical contemplation, rationality, and

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elegance. Accordingly, elements of the 'epic' or 'dialectic' theater such as narrating or storytelling, alienation effect, distance, breaking with empathy, historization, and interruption were seen as its tools of illusion destruction or 'anti-illusionism' (Staiger 18–25; Hecht 33; Nef; Turk; Stanzel 82ff.; Knopf 394–8). Even those critics who did not consider the sympathizing and the identifying with characters being completely 'removed' by the alienation effect's 'deliberate distancing' in the end point of Brecht's views on illusion and emotion also viewed 'the importance of illusion' as being reduced or 'softened' and the spectators' sympathy und identification as being 'counterpoised' (Bentley 219; Gobert 13).

This study draws on the cognitivist notion of *blending* in mind and literature (Brandt 2004; Fauconnier and Turner 2008; Brandt and Brandt 2005) to reexamine the existing theory of alienation effect as an illusion and emotion destroyer in Brecht's Epic Theater. The model established in this study illustrates the relationship between the blended illusion in Brecht's theater and the complex cognitive and emotional activities in the spectators' mental spaces. It shows that the intricate blending process facilitated by the alienation effect through the blurring insertion of the conscious with the subconscious expands spectators' mental spaces for imagination and enhances their illusion and emotion, instead of eliminating them.

1. Relationship with Emotion

This section will examine the relationship of Brecht's *CCC* with emotions given his changed views of emotion. In his mature writing *Kleines Organon*, Brecht used the 'cold and unemotional way of singing of Singer' to describe the terror associated with Grusha's rescue of the child in *CCC* (Sz77 54) as an example of his 'epic' techniques to ensure that the spectators are able to learn in a conscious way.

Indeed, as the analysis in the previous section demonstrated, the 'cold and unemotional' way of singing of Singer is indeed employed at the beginning of his appearance in the main play. This consciously objective representational method allows as Brecht intended the spectator to view the stage story with an observer attitude. The question is however if this 'cold and unemotional' technique is prevailing in this play.

From the cognitive psychological perspective, every emotion has its relational meaning and emotion can be a result of apprehending such a relational meaning, but can also be activated or modified by events without the apprehension of such a relational meaning or be used to organize, align or realign the individual's social relations (Lazarus 1991; Deigh 1994; Parkinson 2009). Based on this cognitive emotion theory, the answer to the above question is negative. This answer is supported by the following observations.

First, Singer does not maintain this 'cold and unemotional' way of singing throughout the play. As the plot unfolds, he departs from his narrator's appearance and becomes more and more emotional, involved, occasionally even excited through his differentiated addresses, warnings, urges, and commands toward characters such as Grusha and Governor.

Second, the unemotional 'narrative' singing technique is only one of the many ways of the 'theatrical' characters' presentation. For example, these 'theatrical' characters can also be, as we will see in the next section, engaged in simulated dialogs that are not only conducted in an emotional way, but are also intended to achieve an emotional impact on the spectators.

These emotional, expressive, and simulated dramatic presentations undoubtedly have a more manipulative impact on the spectators' emotions than the plain dramatic representation by dramatic characters such Grusha, Azdak and Governor on their own in some dramatic circumstances, which prevent the spectators from expressing themselves.

Let us take a look at the scene, in which Judge Azdak asks Grusha who brought up the noble child and now does not want to return it why she does not want to give the child a noble life. Grusha looks around in the court and remains silent.

A song comes from the music corner to her help: 'If the child went in golden shoes, it would kick me on my soft spots....' This song appears to bring together Azdak and Grusha in silence. Based on this agreement, Azdak orders the trial with the chalk circle that secures Grusha, the foster mother¹, the child. The mounting of this 'theatrical' song helps break up the dramatic silence and incites emotions in the spectator by revealing hidden mental activities of the character Grusha.

Without such a 'theatrical' illumination or clarification, such an emotional effect would not be achievable. Gobert (2006) sees this as 'cognitive catharsis' that gives rise to emotional effects of *CCC* and believes that Brecht's nuanced treatment demonstrates 'the integral role that emotions, differently understood, might play in ethical decision making' (13).

Certainly, the emotional effect that Brecht intended is not the purpose itself, but rather the result of understanding human actions in difficult situations. For the late Brecht, the alienation effect in terms of emotion means that nothing onstage should 'be taken for granted', even when the spectators greatly share emotions with the character, they should know what is at stake. He insisted not to let the spectators simply share feelings with everything and take it as granted, god given, and unchangeable. For Brecht, the negative main character is much more interesting than the positive one because his feelings will be not simply shared, but rather critically reviewed (Sz77, 269).

2. The Relationship of Imagination with Illusion and Emotion

This section will explore from the cognitive perspective the pivotal role imagination plays in alienating 'theatrical' techniques to achieve illusionist and emotional effects in *CCC*. It is not this study's focus to scrutinize the dramatic illusion in the main play itself because extensive critical work has already shown that the illusion—or 'vital lie' as Abbott puts itⁱⁱ—of the heroic characters Grusha and Azdak is at least as vital as, if not more vital than, that in any traditional drama. Lyons (1968), for instance, points out, '[T]hat consciousness of a real and cruel world exists in *CCC*; but, in this play, the poet seems to share with the spectator an enjoyment of the aesthetic illusion that compassion can exist, freely and creatively, in a sordid, suffering world and be rewarded with happiness rather than self-destruction' (xviii).

The issue, on which this study focuses, is rather if this dramatic illusion is in any way weakened, softened, or reduced by the alienation effect through the insertion of 'theatrical' illusion, and more importantly, if the spectators are in any way prevented from sympathy or identification with characters. Let us first examine the role Singer plays in the following scene.

SINGER.

Why so gay, you, making for home?

MUSICIANS.

Because with a smile the child

Has won new parents for himself, that's why I'm gay.

Because I disposed of the little angel

That's why I'm happy.

SINGER.

And why are you sad?

MUSICIANS.

I am sad because I'm single and free

Of the little burden in whom a heart was beating:

Like one robbed, like one impoverished I'm going. (CCC35)

This conversation between Singer and Musicians involves an emulation of a realistically impossible dialog between Singer and Grusha in a pure dramatic play. Here Singer plays the role of a rhetorical questioner of Grusha's mind or consciousness (Beecher 2006; Gardner1985) and Musicians answer his questions in Grusha's person from her perspective. This discussion impresses the spectators with the blending of, and the tension between, the realistic play of Singer and his Musiciansⁱⁱⁱ on the one hand and the imaginary play of Singer as a 'theatrical' character and Grusha on the other, as well as the tension resulting from the 'theatrical' simulation, 'recreation', or 'mind-reading' of her answers in cognitivist terms (Currie & Ravenscroft 2002; Oakley & Brandt 2007).

The dialog provides the spectator with an illumination of Grusha's complicated feelings after she left Governor's son at a farmer's home. The simulated perspective reveals Grusha's thoughts, emotional motivations and object-choice that underlie her action, which cannot be demonstrated through dramatic action.

In addition to this scene, the series of the 'theatrical' insertions or frames (depending on which play – the valley dispute play or the chalk circle play – is considered the main play) around this scene resolves the dramatically impossible task of revealing Grusha's cognitive and emotional development in her salvation of a unrelated child.

While her initial taking of Michael may only be understood as a more humanistic-rational action than an emotional one (Grusha has no emotional bond with the noble child and her taking him away is the only way to save him), her long journey rescuing Michael helps her develop an emotional bond with him. Ironically, while the initial action is often perceived as 'abnormal' (Suvin1989, 165) and 'unwise' (Gobert 2006, 24), her later emotional bond is developed based on more cognitive motivations. Through a long learning process, Grusha is more and more convinced that not only Michael depends on her, but the boy is now also emotionally indispensable for her.

In his theoretical essays *Der Messingkauf* and *Kleines Organon*, Brecht discussed Singer's receptive impact on the spectator. He emphasized the spectators' decision to accept or refuse a character based on their mental activities at the 'conscious' level instead of their 'subconscious' (Sz75). Certainly Brecht's 'theatrical' illumination allows the spectators to imagine or visualize things that otherwise could not be perceived due to the lack of possibilities in case of full dramatic representation. However, the 'theatrical' revelation through Singer's and Musicians' simulation does not distance the spectators from Grusha, but rather connects the spectators with Grusha and intensifies their feelings for her.

The appeal to her 'consciousness' in Singer's and Musicians' simulation helps the spectators understand Grusha's complex emotions, i.e., the joy for having found new parents for the child and the simultaneous sorrow for missing 'the little angel' (CCC 35). In addition, this cognitive appeal urges the spectators to sympathize with Grusha because cognitive or thought-like processes, especially certain inference-like or 'rational' processes produce emotion (Deigh).

By appealing this consciousness, Brecht creates an additional layer of illusion, or a 'theatrical' perspective, which blurs the spectators' 'consciousness' with their imagination.

He uses Singer's and Musicians' perspective to 'distance' or cognitively 'blend' Grusha's perspective with the spectators' perspectives, and electrify their subconscious and emotional activities with their conscious, cognitive, imaginative activities. Therefore, Brecht's mediated cognitive distancing is arguably more manipulative than the naive dramatic illusion.

Because of the plausibility of Grusha's thoughts in the Musicians' presentation, spectators willingly give up questioning her perspective in Musicians' simulation, 'recreative imagination', or 'mind-reading' (Currie & Ravenscroft 2002, 9) even if the rendered answers do not come from her directly. The 'theatrical' simulation or emulated imaginary communication between Singer and Musicians takes advantage of the spectators' 'consciousness' as onlookers. Through the Musicians' simulation or 'recreative imagination', the spectators are encouraged to perform 'perspective shifting' and utilize their cognitive and imaginative capacities. To be exact, the simulated perspective activates the spectators' recreative imagination, i.e. their imaginative capacity for putting themselves in other people's situations, and encourages them to comprehend Grusha's mental states by visualizing her mental states or "placing themselves in her shoes." The result of such a cognitive simulation is powerful; Grusha's perspective becomes the spectators' perspectives and they start to recreate in their imagination Grusha's dilemmas and what they would do if they were in the same situations.

The simulation of Grusha's person and perspective, as does the make-believe of dramatic illusion, relies on the spectators' acceptance of this pretense based on the role they play in theater. This reveals the illusory effect of this 'theatrical' dialogue between 'theatrical' characters. They provide spectators with 'first hand' information, which prevents them from questioning if the Musicians' answers reflect Grusha's own thoughts. As a result, the spectators have to accept the 'theatrical' simulation. To induce spectators to believe the truthfulness and originality of this simulation, Brecht's theater needs 'theatrical' make-believe or pretense of theater, which is, however, not illusion-breaking, but rather the original foundation of illusion (Schneider) based on the human beings' capability of understanding pretense starting from 16 months of age (Bosco *et al.* 2006).

Singer and his Musicians openly use 'theatrical' pretense to invite spectators to visualize and empathize with the dramatic pretense of Grusha's story (Figure 1). Therefore, the 'theatrical' simulation of Grusha's answers to Singer's questions does not destroy, but rather intensifies the dramatic illusion. By accepting this 'theatrical' simulation and knowing more of Grusha's circumstances and her thoughts, the spectators are not at all prevented from sympathizing with Grusha, but rather encouraged to share her happiness and sadness in her dramatic situation.

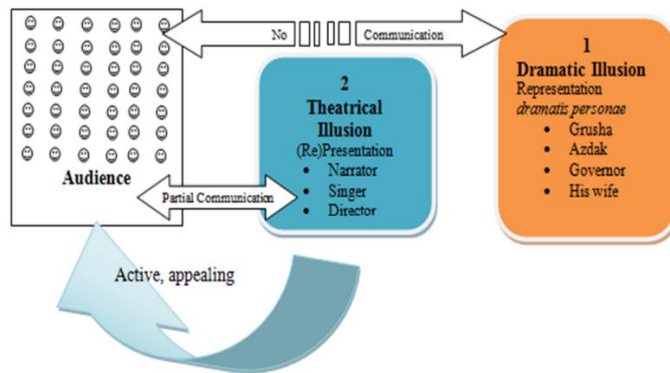


Figure 1: Audience Involvement in Brecht's Theater

The information of Grusha's mental activities, once accepted by spectators, becomes part of their 'memory' or either remembered or imagined experience, which is based on 'experiences of the past, shaped by our current condition and imagination' (Blair, 74). This knowledge is vital for the blending in the spectators' mental spaces because it provides the spectators with input or food of thought for their perception, reception, and decision.

The experiments of cognitive, sociological and psychological experiments indicate that neither physiological nor psychological processes alone can fully explain the formation of emotions. Rather, emotions are seen as physiological processes that interact with cognitive, social and situational factors as stimulus and inputs (Schachter 1962). Conceptual blending, a process that operates below the level of consciousness and involves connecting two concepts to create new meaning, can be used to explain abstract thought, creativity, and language (Fauconnier 2000; Fauconnier & Mark).

Brecht's insertion of 'theatrical' illusion in his CCC, which focuses on the importance of the 'conscious' versus the 'subconscious', generates enhanced illusionist and emotional effects by taking advantage of the common human cognitive capacity.

3. Blending: How Do Illusion and Emotion Work in the CCC?

Based on the above analysis, we can see that there are two levels of illusion in the main chalk circle play resulting from two channels of communication^{iv} or two levels of illusion. The first channel of communication or level of illusion is a 'theatrical' or framing one, represented by Singer and his Musicians; the other is a dramatic one, represented by Grusha, Azdak and other characters. The communication among dramatic characters produces dramatic illusion, and the communication of Singer with Musicians, spectators, and dramatic characters produces 'theatrical' illusion.

Singer's 'theatrical' communication is similar to what Pfister calls 'the external communication system' because both of them concern interaction with the spectators in theater instead of dramatic characters in play (Pfister 67f). The former differs from the latter in that a) 'theatrical' communication is initiated by a 'theatrical' character, i.e. a fictional narrator (Schlueter 1979) or a stage director, rather than by an actor; b) it also involves dramatic characters, rather than only spectators. In contrast to dramatic communication, which consists mostly of interactive dialogue among *dramatis personae*, 'theatrical' communication is mainly a one-way communication, i.e. communication directed to either dramatic characters or spectators without expecting a response from the addressed, be it dramatic characters or spectators.

For example, when dramatic characters such as Grusha and Azdak talk to each other, they normally expect a response from their dialogue partner. This is however not the case with Singer's communication with spectators or characters. When Singer talks to spectators, the latter rarely react to him. Rather, he must even ensure that his communication does not actually involve the spectators in the fictional world of the play because an unexpected reaction from the spectators could then actually destroy the illusion onstage, which is ironically a proof of the fundamentally illusionist nature of Brecht's 'theatrical' plays. When Singer talks to dramatic characters, their response is mostly passive.

The partial interaction of Singer with the dramatic characters is of great interest to this analysis because it represents the merger of the 'theatrical' communication and illusion with the dramatic ones (Figure 2).

The partial communication between the 'theatrical' world and the dramatic world ensures that the two illusory levels coexist, which in turn makes it clear that illusion is not destroyed, but rather enhanced. This enhancement of the dramatic illusion through a 'theatrical' insertion allows the spectator to accept the dramatic illusion more readily than either if there were only dramatic illusion or if the dramatic illusion were fully destroyed because it allows the spectators to have a more associated reference ('theater') to the dramatic illusion through the 'theatrical' presence to which the spectators can better relate because of their own identity as part of theater. In addition, it maintains the illusion (drama), for whose reason the spectators are present in theater.

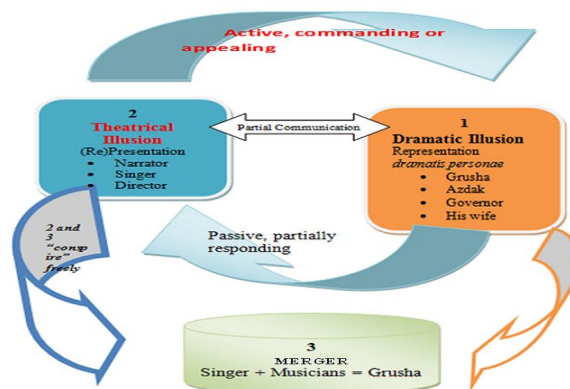


Figure 2: Merger of blended illusions in Brecht's Theater

The technique of dual communication and illusion is a very effective device to present the stage story. First it allows the dramatic communication to focus on significant events and interesting moments of the dramatic story. At the same time, it enables the 'theatrical' communication to embrace a much broader scope of the presentation. It provides a much more dynamic comparison of the dramatic events represented in the dramatic communication. This structural addition is therefore not a simple extension of, but also an effective innovation of, existent presentational devices, because it adds an entirely new perspective to the presentation.

'Theatrical' communication can work not only **against** dramatic communication as a result of the alienation effect or distance, but also **for** dramatic communication in the form of 'theatrical' simulation, to provide spectators with more access points to the dramatic communication.

Short, the blending of the theatrical with the dramatic extends the spectators' mental spaces for their imagination when they sit in Brecht's theater watching his plays.

4. Imagination: Complex Blending That Enhances Illusion and Emotion

That Brecht's theater creates not only illusion, but also blended illusion contradicts his theoretical intention. This however does not mean that his theater is less valid as art. The merger of the 'theatrical' illusion and dramatic one in theater triggers blending in the spectators' mental spaces (Turner2004), i.e. a direct blending with the dramatic illusion, and an indirect blending with the dramatic illusion through the 'theatrical' one based on 'suspension of disbelief' (Cook2006), that is partial acceptance of selected inputs by willingly discarding their doubts of obvious discrepancies between the conceptual inputs to be merged.

The concept of complex blending used in this section draws on the terms of conceptual blending (Coulson 2001; 2006; Coulson & Oakley 2000; 2005; Fauconnier & Turner 1998; 2002; Turner 1996) and double-scope blending (Fauconnier and Turner 2008). While conceptual blending is a fundamental mental operation, the most advanced form of conceptual blending is called 'complex conceptual blending', 'double-scope blending', or 'double-scope integration', which consists of integration of two or more conceptual arrays as inputs, constructs a 'partial match' between two inputs, and projects selectively from those inputs into a novel 'blended' mental space for dynamic development of new thoughts (Fauconnier and Turner 2008).

The complex blending, which takes place in individual spectators' mental spaces, represents a complex conceptual blending process. The use of fictional theatrical characters, for example, takes advantage of the spectators' conceptual blending of the 'consciousness' of their real presence in theater and fictional characters to distinguish these theatrical characters from the dramatic ones.

This blended illusion, which pretends a theatrical reality in charge of disclosing a dramatic illusion, makes Brecht's theater artistically more intricate, manipulative, and thus more illusory.

The following graphic diagram illustrates how the blending of double illusions works in Brecht's theater and spectators' mental spaces (Figure 3).

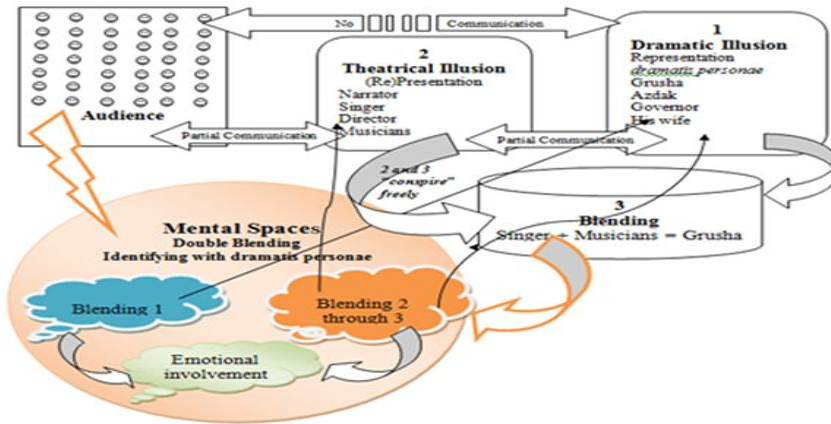


Figure 3: Blending in the Spectators' Mental Spaces

In this model, the square on the top left represents the spectators, which both share the institution of theater consisting of the world of 'theatrical' illusion (2) and the world of dramatic illusion (1) and generate mental spaces that are informed by the blending facilitated by a closed dramatic communication and partial 'theatrical' communication in theater. In theater, the spectators have no communication with the dramatic world (1) as the spectators and the *dramatis personae* do not and cannot talk to each other. On the other hand, the spectators are granted partial communication with the 'theatrical' community (2) because Singer can address the spectators directly, but the latter cannot talk back to him and his 'theatrical' troupe. The partial communication is also true for the relationship between the world of dramatic illusion (1) and the world of 'theatrical' illusion (2) because Singer can address the *dramatis personae* directly, but the latter cannot talk back to him and his 'theatrical' troupe; the dramatic world can only passively respond to the 'theatrical' world.

Both the 'theatrical' community and the dramatic community generally remain within their boundaries and communicate with each other internally, i.e. within their respective world. However, the merger of these two different levels of 'reality' in theater, i.e., in front of spectators 'eye, facilitates the blending in individual spectators' mental spaces.

The blocked communication and the illusion caused by the enactment or presentation as if it were real world happenings facilitate the blending in individual spectators' mental spaces, causing the spectators to become emotionally more involved with *dramatis personae*, either positively (toward Grusha or Azdak) or negatively (toward Governor, his wife, etc.).

This increased emotional engagement is then intensified by the external merger of blended illusion (3), which is facilitated by, and 'conspires' with, the partial communication between the theatrical world (2) such as Singer and Musicians and the dramatic world such as Grusha because this external merger causes the blending in individual spectators' mental spaces. The insertion of a fictional 'theatrical' world into the dramatic world gives the spectators the 'realistic' illusion of proximity to the 'theatrical' world. In fact, this dramaturgical merger in theater facilitates the blending between the dramatic illusion and the 'theatrical' illusion in the spectators' mental spaces.

Certainly, the blending in individual spectators' mental spaces has different effects on individual spectators' emotions depending on their individual social relations and experiences. However, this blending also manipulates because it intensifies the illusionist emotional effects on the spectators. It causes them to activate, align, realign, organize, modify, or increase their emotions as the result of apprehending or non-apprehending the relational meaning of the actions or behaviors of the characters such as Grusha or Governor's wife. This manipulation finally leads to the spectators' identification process.

The identification of the spectators takes place directly with the dramatic characters or indirectly with them through the 'theatrical' mediation. Through direct or mediated conceptual blending, 'a basic mental operation that leads to new meaning, global insight, and conceptual compressions useful for memory and manipulation of otherwise diffuse ranges of meaning' (Fauconnier 2000), the spectators' emotions are manipulated.

In other words, the intensification of spectators' emotions either in favor of or against the dramatic characters is the result of complex external and internal blending processes. This indicates that 'theatrical' characters play an important role in guiding the spectators' conceptual blending and accompanied emotional changes.

This blending induced and mediated by 'theatrical' manipulation is a more complex and more intensive, thus more imaginative process than the direct blending facilitated by the 'native' dramatic illusion. The 'theatrical' illusion becomes an intensifier and enhancer of dramatic illusion and emotion rather than their destroyer.

The blending of direct blending and mediated blending in individual spectators' mental spaces therefore exemplifies the power of enhanced illusion through cognitive manipulation of imaginative minds and emotions in theatrical art. It uses the spectators' consciousness of their presence in theater and strengthens it through the fiction or metaphor of theater (or other theatrical institutions, such as narration, singing, dancing, directing, etc.) to intensify the dramatic illusion, to which Brecht calls the spectators to keep a 'distance' in order to avoid an emotional identification.

It is, therefore, of great significance that the blending in Brecht's *CCC* triggers and intensifies its spectators' imaginative capacities, which are the creative aspect of the mind of the humankind. This effect takes place when spectators' conceptual activities are simultaneously engaged in the three stages of conscious processing, 'a maintained and remembered present, a conditional and counterfactual variation of this content, and a perceptual and theatrical reenacting of variants' (Oakley & Brandt 2007, 21). In other words, the spectators in Brecht's theater are engaged in a more complex conceptual process than in an outspoken illusionist theater because they not only blend what they have maintained and remembered in memories with what they see and hear on stage, but also accept or reject through a selective process with the 'conscious'.

Since the 'theatrical' insertion or blending creates more space for imagination than the one-dimensional dramatic illusion and has the power to transcend the boundary between the 'conscious' and 'sub-conscious' spheres that Brecht attempted to delineate (Sz75), it is also emotionally more manipulative than the dramatic illusion alone.

This important role of Brecht's 'theatrical' involvement in shaping illusionist emotions or emotional effects through illusionist interaction is evidently effective because according to cognitivist emotion theories, emotions can not only be socially and psychologically defined, but also rationally and cognitively shaped in relation to,

in context with and interaction with one's social and psychological situations (Lyons 1980; Sousa 1987; Gordon 1990; Deigh 1994; Strongman 1996; Nussbaum 2001; Sugiera 2002). As emotions are 'forms of intense attention and engagement, in which the world is appraised in its relation to the self', and 'emotions are forms of judgment' (Nussbaum 2001), the theatrical characters such as Singer and his Musicians often make comments on dramatic events or characters' actions and behaviors, which appeal spectators for cognitive and emotional operations, including for example cognitive and emotional evaluations of and judgments on the characters' actions and behaviors.

Brecht's knowledge-based 'theatrical' techniques take advantage of the human beings' neuro-physiological mechanism, which allows spectators to 'mentally revisit' (Anderson 1996, 108) their previous situations and experiences or to share the situations of other people without actually returning to them or having even experienced them before. The 'theatrical' illuminations offer spectators the opportunities of discovering the relational meanings in the causes, content, and consequences of their individual emotions relating to dramatic events and characters' behaviors and actions. Their emotional changes are not just final responses to individually understood meanings or acts motivated by their beliefs and objectives, but can also be circumstantial adjustments to unfolding events and active ways of having the spectators transform or produce meanings in their engagement with unfolding events. Therefore, the spectators' emotional responses in Brecht's theater can be seen as their engagement with their social and moral environment, 'relational alignment or realignment' in cognitive terms (Parkinson 2009, 1511ff) as a result of their cognitively blended mental spaces.

On the other hand, installing fictional 'theatrical' or meta-dramatic characters allows Brecht's 'theatrical' plays to overtly employ pretense to furnish 'theatrical' characters or events with imaginary yet plausible or realistic properties. The dynamic core of this pretense is not to present the fictional theater, including 'theatrical' characters such as Singer, or events such as presenting a play as reality, but to present the dramatic events and characters such as story or object of presentation.

This pretending device has features similar to those of the chorus in ancient Greek drama (Kirkwood 1954, 1-22), the pretenseful acting and the entrance self-introduction of the character in traditional Chinese theater (Yang)^v and the equally pretenseful game-playing and its recognition in human childhood (Harris 2000; Bosco *et al.* 2006, 3–10). In Brecht's *CCC*, this 'theatrical reality' of alienation does not substitute, replace, destroy, or even weaken the dramatic one, but rather supplements and thus intensifies it.

The dialogue Singer conducts with Musicians simulating Grusha, for instance, activates the spectators' ability of 'quasi-perceptual experience' in place of appropriate external stimuli, of 'seeing things in the mind's eye, hearing them in the mind's ear' (Thomas1999)^{vi}. As a result of their activated capability of imagining the character's thoughts, motives, expectations, and emotions, the spectators may become more worried about the foster mother's fate and develop more hostile feelings against those who prosecute her.

Conclusion

This paper covers a fascinating new ground in reception terms in regard to theater, especially Brecht's theater by using the concept of blending, developed in cognitive poetics, on theater. From this perspective, this article revisited the trajectory of his view formation and changes of illusion and emotion. The evolution of the early Brecht's diametrically anti-illusionist and anti-emotional views of emotion to the late Brecht's insistence on 'theatrical' anti-illusionist estrangement and more differentiated views of emotion allowed the playwright Brecht a fruitful engagement with Aristotelian aesthetics (Silk 2001) and extensive experiments with various 'theatrical' techniques that make his plays much more complex and dynamic, cognitively and emotionally much more fertile than a plain drama. Paradoxically, his plays are neither lacking illusions nor can they escape illusions; rather, they enhance illusions by additional illusory layers because illusions are intrinsic of any theatrical artwork.

Based on this reexamination, this study presents a fresh view on Brecht's alienation effect by reexamined the existing understanding that Brecht's alienation effect, such as prologue, audience addresses, and comments of 'theatrical' characters, e.g. a detached storyteller, destroys illusion and sympathetic emotions towards characters.

It argues that Brecht's alienation effect, too famous for alienating the spectator, does in fact the opposite by creating a new space for imagination or a new layer of illusion—'theatrical' illusion, which manipulates and intensifies emotions such as sympathy and identification. The prologue, a dramatic illusion by itself, predefines, and thus confirms, the main play as 'an illusion within an illusion'. Singer originates from this dramatic illusion and embodies in the main play the 'theatrical' illusion that frames and dictates the main play's illusion.

Certainly Singer's 'theatrical' illusion builds on our consciousness as onlookers. However, it follows the same make-believe principle of dramatic illusion and is therefore by no means less, but rather even more, illusory than the latter. By working together with—either in favor of or against—dramatic illusion, either in the epic form of explaining it, in the ironic form of alienating it, or in the dramatic form of simulating it, Singer's 'blending' of the seemingly more 'theatrical' illusion with the dramatic one induces the spectator to share the intended emotions in favor of characters such as Grusha and Azdak and against characters such as Governor and his wife and therefore proves to be more audience manipulating than the dramatic illusion alone. The aesthetic power of *CCC* is thus based on the juxtaposition of 'theatrical' illusion with dramatic illusion, which takes advantage of the spectators' cognitive ability of 'conceptual integration' or 'blending', and enhances this ability. It draws on the actors' imaginative capability of pretense and make-believe on the one hand and develops the spectators' imaginative capability of conceiving of the characters' thoughts, motives, and emotions, and expectations on the other.

Rather than challenging generations of scholars—and Brecht himself—this article frames the research question in terms of another layer of reception strategy. Drawing on the theory on metatheater, this study analyzes the complex blending processes in spectators' brains (Solms and Turnbull 2002) caused by the blended illusion in *CCC* of the 'theatrical' character (such as Singer) and the dramatic character (Grusha), and the interplay between and among them and the spectators.

Even as Brecht splits the theatrical and the dramatic, his play calls for a mental blending on the spectators' part, a requirement that complicates the imaginative and intensifies the emotional.

The finding of more complex blending in Brecht Theater explains why so many audience members, including Brechtians, respond sympathetically and emotionally to Grusha even as they are aware of Brecht's theory of alienation. The model posits a playwright more subtly manipulative than the Brecht the existing literature depicts.

The blended illusion in Brecht's theater triggers complex blending processes in spectators' mental spaces. Through these processes, the spectators' brains are activated to structure and compare events and arguments in theater and in their mental spaces and to generate complex analyses, staging them out not merely as observers, but more as actors or judges as if in a theater of ideas according to cognitive scripts. As a result, the spectators' cognitive, imaginative, and emotional capacities and activities are enriched with more inputs and electrified and catalyzed with more stimuli.

Therefore, Brecht's contribution to world theater is not the destruction of illusion and emotion or the reduction of their importance in his theater, but rather their complication and diversification, and thus ultimately their intensification and enhancement. He accomplished this through the conscious, skillful juxtaposition of dramatic communication with the 'theatrical' communication of 'theatrical' characters among themselves, with spectators, or with dramatic characters, and the interplay between illusions on both dramatic and 'theatrical' levels. This complicated multilevel communication activates the spectators' consciousness of theater and intensifies their cognitive processes through the blending of the two-level illusion in their mental spaces. Paradoxically, their cognitive processes do not prohibit, but rather give rise to a far fuller range of imaginative and subconscious activities and thus promote their emotional involvements.

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ⁱ Although both Brecht's Grusha and Li Xingdao's Haitang are from low classes, the verdict granting the child to the foster mother instead of the biological mother in Brecht's play differs from that of the thirteenth-century play and that of the popular 1924 adaptation of *Klabund* (Alfred Henschke), in which the biological mother is secured the child (Ritchie). This change makes the illusion of Grusha more interesting, but it also makes this illusion much more challenging in terms of its appeal to the audience.

ⁱⁱ For Abbott, the 'vital lie' of Brecht's hero is 'to use his creative power to remake the world so that the sacrifices of the gentler figures will not be necessary' (99).

ⁱⁱⁱ The 'dialogue' between Singer and his Musicians is similar to that between the chorus leader and the chorus in the early Greek tragedy.

^{iv} The model of two channels of communication explored here draws on Pfister's (1988) two-communication system of theater. This model is to some extent similar to Martin's and Sauter's model of three theatrical communication levels, i.e., the sensory, the artistic, and the fictional, which are distinguishable by their nature, but dynamically interconnected during a performance. The dramatic communication in the two channel communication is the same as the fictional level of the three-level model, whereas the 'theatrical' communication in the two channel communication goes across both the artistic and the fictional levels of the three-level model.

^v For instance, instead of walking through a visible door of a realistic inn, the actor indicates on an open stage the entrance of a door by words such as 'This is an inn, now I am walking in it' and hand movements opening an imaginary door and subsequent stepping over an imaginary threshold.

^{vi} The capacity of quasi-perceptual experience is expected from the audience of traditional Chinese theater, which is, in contrast to European neo-classic realistic theater, characteristic of absence of realistic or even naturalistic stage properties and set.