

## Power, Knowledge, Resistance: A Foucauldian Reading on Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*

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### Abstract

This study intends to argue that Mother Courage, the main character of Bertolt Brecht's play, *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1941), fails to support her children financially because of a socio-psychological state defined by Foucault as "lack of knowledge". As a result, she pays a heavy price by losing all her children in quest of profit. Mother Courage is ignorant of the extant power struggle, and gives priority to profit rather than to her children. I think Mother Courage acts as a war profiteer and does not have the required knowledge in order to be able to exercise her own subversive power against the ruling class. This reading intends to offer a study of the two major aspects of "power"— "power and knowledge", and "power and resistance,"— in selected play.

**Key words:** Lack of knowledge; *Mother Courage*; Power; Profit; Resistance

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### INTRODUCTION

In this study, I intend to argue that Mother Courage's default, which falls in a Foucauldian discourse of power deals with her powerless state, represented in the smallness of her capital, shows her in danger of being

impoverished because she is too exploited and dehumanized. My argument is that, her failure to save her children results from her state of "powerlessness". "Powerlessness" means that she has a very little share in the distribution of power, which ends in the loss of her children. This study intends to argue that the dominant ideology distributes power and deprives Mother Courage of power. Mother Courage's unconscious submission to the call of ideology is the source of her submission to the unequal distribution of power and wealth in a setting of war. Ideology blinds Mother Courage so far as to make her accept her fate. The ideology of earning profit in a capitalist environment limits Mother Courage's resistance, and results in the loss of all her children. Mother Courage is practically powerless to resist those forces which limit or channel her life.

Borrowing from Foucault, I believe Mother Courage is powerless because of her "lack of knowledge." Her lack of knowledge means that she is ignorant of the extant power struggle in the community that she lives and works in. In addition, despite her ignorance, her maternal feelings constantly conflicts with material interest. To illustrate the concept of "lack of knowledge", I would like to suggest that Mother Courage acts as a war profiteer and tries to make a profit from war; even though, she does not realize that, in a capitalist society, those at the top of the hierarchy of power have knowledge and power; and therefore, have a real chance of profiting from war. Furthermore, she does not have the required knowledge in order to be able to exercise her own subversive power against the ruling class.

The sociological reception of Foucault is considered as a rich resource for inquiries of the sociological type and intersects with several concepts such as: knowledge, power and his conception of resistance. These concepts have received a great deal of attention because of their widespread existence concerning sociological aspects of

life. Three inextricably-linked concepts are integral to Foucault's theoretical project. For Foucault, power-relations, necessarily involve domination and this is because power is all-determining. As a result, resistance is ultimately an omnipresent principle (Pickett, 1996). Besides, subjects do not exercise power consciously; they are created by power-relations; in other words, they are power's passive objects (Schneck, 1987). Consequently, the subject that is opposed to the interests of power—cannot exist. There is no power that is exercised without a series of aims or objectives. By the same token, we see in the play, *Mother Courage*, that the war is drawn by the authorities to earn profit (Bertolt, 1980). They want individuals to live on war and feed its engines. Individuals are, for Foucault, both the subjects and the objects of power. He says that individuals are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising power (Heller, 1996).

I think it seems impossible to investigate the so-called notions of power and knowledge, without considering their relatedness to the concepts like discourse and ideology. Primarily, I wish to focus on the notion of discourse and on a cluster of other notions which have become closely associated with it; in particular, the notions of knowledge and power. The notion of discourse has come largely from a complex amalgam of cultural studies that is associated with the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault states that discourse is seen to reflect the realities of dominance and repression existing in current relations of power. That is, the pattern of discourse imposes a discipline of sorts on human statements which works to limit and normalize the making of such statements (Schneck, 1987). The works of Foucault revolve around the pervasiveness of power relations within the pattern of discourse and demonstrate that knowledge is part of the relationship involving both the pattern of discourse and the relations of power. For Foucault, the production of discourses is the mechanism of social power. Corollary to this, he asserts that those who wish to exercise social power must use discourse in order to do so (Stoddart, 2007). Further, Foucault reveals:

The mechanisms of power cannot function unless knowledge, or rather knowledge apparatuses, are formed, organized, and put into circulation. (Ibid., p.205)

Second, I will concentrate on the notion of "ideology". I intend to provide an explanation for the ways in which ideology and discourse function to convince people to accept systems of social inequality as acceptable and immune from social transformation. I will focus primarily on the interplay between ideology and discourse. Hence, theories of ideology and discourse are used to explain the intersections between the social production of knowledge and the perpetuation of power relations. Discourse and ideology are mingled with each other. For example, Purvis and Hunt argue that while we can analytically separate discourse and ideology, we

should also understand ideology as an effect of discourse. In essence, where discourse is mobilized to reinforce systems of social power it functions as ideology (Ibid., p.193). I think that the concept of "ideology" is the starting point which Marxist theory utilized to describe the process through which the dominant ideas within a society reflect the interests of a ruling class.

It is my purpose here, drawing primarily on Foucault's writings and interviews from *Discipline and Punish to The History of Sexuality*, to elaborate on his so-called theoretical concepts and apply them to the play *Mother Courage*. The focus of this chapter is on the circulation of power in the political structure of the capitalist society. Both, the behavior of Mother Courage as a capitalist in the course of actions and the ideological forces managed by authorities are to be analyzed. In this study of *Mother Courage and Her Children*, my particular reading implies that Mother Courage fails in her attempt to maintain a way of profit, and at the same time saves her children from the war. Mother Courage's shortcoming; i.e., her "lack of knowledge", which theoretically is the cause of her failure, and the reason why she loses her children will be discussed in this study.

This study is classified into two sections. I have tried to borrow such elements of Foucault's theory as discourse, ideology, power, knowledge, and resistance, to show how these can be used to read *Mother Courage* in the light of Foucauldian sociology. The first section, "Power and Knowledge," deals with Mother Courage's lack of knowledge in regard to her state of powerlessness in the power structure of the society. As the name of the section bears, Foucault's concepts of "power" and "knowledge" might be applied to the actions of Mother Courage, when she tries to make a profit, and at the same time save her children. Primarily, Mother Courage's endeavor falls into Foucault's category of powerlessness, which derives from her lack of knowledge. The section inevitably reflects the interpellation of the subject, as a docile body, by the dominant power, feeding on her lack of knowledge. Section two, entitled "Power and Resistance" employ Foucault's notions of 'power' and 'resistance,' to analyze the imposition of power by the ideology of the rulers in the process of domination and subjugation. Mother Courage's resistance to the call of the ideology of the hegemony of the dominant power becomes relevant, even though she is ignorant of such calls.

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## 1. POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

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"Power" and "knowledge", according to Foucault, directly implicate one another; where there is no power relations without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor is there knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute power relations at the same time. In other words, the constitution of a field of

knowledge depends on the institution of a possible object within power relations, and, vice versa. Power takes as its target only what is capable of being invested in cognitive relations (Keenan, 1987). Furthermore, Foucault studies the patterns of discourse upon the relationship of power and knowledge, to argue that the pattern of discourse is intimately joined with the relations of power. Then, following the priority of the relationship of power with discourse, the relations of power are not inescapable from the complexity of the ontological status of knowledge. In fact, knowledge is ineluctably derivative of the power/discourse relationship (Schneck, 1987, pp.29-30). I think it is imperative to have a definition for power in order to get a better understanding of what it contextually implies. Since, the definition of the term power is really extensive, I aim at offering a sociological definition, compatible with that of Foucault's. To the critical question of "what is power?" Foucault answers as follows:

Power is *transformative capacity*, the ability of an individual to influence and modify the actions of other individuals in order to realize certain tactical goals. (Heller, 1996, p.83)

Foucault in "The Question of Power" expresses that power is nothing other than a certain modification... of a series of clashes that constitute the social body (Ibid., p.84). He concludes that

Power is something like the stratification, the institutionalization, the definition of tactics, of implements, and arms which are useful in all these clashes. (Foucault, 1989, pp.14-17)

In an essay entitled "The Subject and Power" Foucault expands his emphasis on the role of power in the constitution of knowledge. So, to summarize the relationship between the two concepts, Foucault believes that, every point in the exercise of power is a site where knowledge is formed. Conversely every piece of knowledge assures the exercise of power (Ibid., p.17).

In Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*, I believe that Mother Courage's loss of her children is the result of her state of lack of knowledge. By "lack of knowledge," I mean that she is ignorant of the extant power struggle, and gives priority to profit and business rather than to her children. Thus, despite her ignorance, her feelings constantly put her in a dilemma of selecting between her maternal and commercial interests. To illustrate the concept of "lack of knowledge", I would like to suggest that Mother courageous acts as a war profiteer and tries to make a profit from war. However, she does not realize that, in a capitalist society, those who have knowledge and power and are at the top of the power system have a real chance of profiting from war. By the same token, she does not have the required knowledge in order to be able to exercise her own subversive power against the ruling class. Here, the main reason lies in the fact that she is obsessed with commercial gains. All the examples presented here emphasize Mother Courage's

insistence on profit rather than her filial love and her affiliation to the peasants, the little people, a fact which is driven from her lack of knowledge, or in Marxist terms, class consciousness. Mother Courage's obsessions are revealed by her singing a business song to stimulate the soldiers to buy her merchandise:

Mother Courage: You captains, tell the drums to slacken, and give your infanters a break:

It's Mother Courage with her wagon full of the finest boots they make.

With crawling lice and looted cattle, with lumbering guns and straggling kit— How can you flog them into battle unless you get them boots that fit?

Captains, your men don't look so well.

So feed them up and let them follow, while you command them into hell. (i. 40-47)

For Mother Courage's deliberate and active participation in war is plain from her very first entrance: it is she who approaches the war in order to reap the profit. She does not wait for fortune to knock on her door, but is always on the move looking for business opportunities. She seeks war and will not leave it; indeed, she fears its end and welcomes its renewal. Mother Courage has travelled far and wide, from Germany to Switzerland and in Scandinavia so that she may be at war.

Hence, the flippancy with which Mother Courage cheats in making the black crosses ironically reflects her lack of awareness that the deaths she has predicted will indeed come to each of her children (Hill, 1975, pp.74-86). Not only does Courage know that the little people pay for war, she knows also the price they pay: death. This is the message of her fortune-telling. Courage arranges the result and discourages her children from getting too close to war. Yet coincidentally the ruse is true.

Mother Courage: (Taking out a sheet of parchment and tearing it up). Eilif, Swiss Cheese, Kattrin, may all of us be torn apart like this if we let ourselves get too mixed up in the war! Watch! Black is for death, so I'm putting a big black cross on this slip of paper. (i. 215-218)

Mother Courage's lack of knowledge is mostly visible when the Sergeant tells her that it is not possible to gain the benefit from the war without giving to it, while she pays no heed and continues to trade. She seeks to balance the needs of her children and makes profit. The Sergeant notifies the consequences of war to her, though. In this sense, Brecht declares that Mother Courage learns nothing (Thomson, 1997, p.77).

Mother Courage: No need for it to be my kids.

Sergeant: Oh, you'd like war to eat the pips but spit out the apple? It's to fatten up your kids, but you won't invest in it.

When a war pays you what you earn, one day it may take something in return. (i. 193-195)

Sergeant to Mother Courage: Like the war to nourish you?

Have to feed it something too (I. 332-333).

Want to live off war, but keep yourself and family out of it, eh? (i. 329)

Mother Courage is deeply occupied with her business and her greed superimposes on her lack of knowledge leads her to grow blind to see the reality of war. We have seen that war means misery. John Willett claims that war is social and economic disorder. War is hunger, and misery for ail except the privileged few (Willett, 1967, pp.53-55). Inhumanity is integral to Courage's business. As a sutler, Courage depends upon war for her profit at any price. In this sense, Mother Courage as the capitalist hyena seeks her personal profit in the destruction, misery, and exploitation of the rest. Mother Courage perpetuates that world— and so herself— not only through her business, but also by reproducing the ideology of her world: The false hope of the little people that they can profit like their rulers from a system of war; the enthusiastic consent of the little people to their own destruction for the profit of their lords. In the third scene, Courage first tells Swiss cheese to abandon the money, but when she finds that the cashbox is stored in her wagon she says it is even more dangerous to get rid of it. When Swiss cheese is captured by the army, Mother Courage starts to bargain over the life of her son. She loses control of the situation and is unable to resolve her financial-family dilemma. Both her lack of knowledge and her voracious appetite usurps her ability to think in an appropriate manner. She intends to utilize the money from the cashbox to buy her cart back from Yvette once Swiss cheese has returned. As her plan goes, Swiss cheese will turn over the cashbox to her. Yet, when Yvette returns, she tells Mother Courage that the soldiers will accept her two hundred florins as a bribe— while, Swiss cheese under torture admits to have thrown the cashbox in the river. Courage discovers that Swiss Cheese's cashbox lies irretrievable at the bottom of the river. Now she must choose: her business or her son. Courage tells Yvette to return offering one hundred twenty florins, so that she has some money left over with which to continue the business. The soldiers refuse, demanding the full two hundred and refusing to wait. Yvette runs back to offer the full amount, but it is too late. She haggles for too long, and loses Swiss cheese. Her real choice was made when she first refused to sell the wagon and so reduced her son's value.

Mother Courage: How'm I to payback two-hundred then?  
I just need a moment to think. It's a bit sudden, what'm I to do?  
Two hundred's too much for me. (iii. 650-652)

Brecht states: "Mother Courage is a profiteer who sacrifices her children to her commercial interests and cannot learn from her experience." (Jones, 1986, p.120) She fails to realize that she will never be able to save Swiss cheese and keep her cart. Her ransom highlights what Brecht says is the main lesson of the play as a whole: The little people cannot profit from a war which runs only for the profit of the greater authorities (Brecht, 2001, pp.140-155). In an essay entitled "Brecht vs. Broadway" Robert Brustein examines Brecht's political motivations in creating the play and asserts that "war is

just the same as trading." He adds: "Characters like Mother Courage are unconscious that they are war subordinates, merely playing local commerce." (Galens, 1999, pp.184-188) Mother Courage insists on trading which proves her state of ignorance. In the sixth scene, there is a dialogue about the duration of war, with Mother Courage anxiously raising the question of how long the war will last. If it is to continue, she can comfortably invest in new goods for the cart. If it will finish soon, she cannot risk investing for fear of being left with goods that cannot be sold. Then the Chaplain says that the war still continues.

Mother Courage: (Returning with Kattrin.) Don't be silly, war'll go on a bit longer, and we'll make a bit more money. That's war for you. Nice way to get a living! (vi. 261-262)

The evidence confirms the claim that Mother Courage seems more concerned with matters belong to finance which derive from lack of knowledge. In this respect, Paul E. Farmer claims:

Brecht's Mother Courage was a woman caught up in the economy of the war— selling food, and just about anything in the mad optimistic belief that "war feeds its people better." But war is a machine that devours its young. (Alisse, 2009, p.178)

Mother Courage's concern with finance is apparent as we can see that in scene three, Courage criticizes war before its ideologue, the Chaplain. It appears that Courage thinks not of glory or dying for an idea, but of material pleasure. She initiates a criticism of the war and, by focusing on its destruction and misery, gives priority to the material over the faith. In the eighth scene, Mother Courage prefers to go into the market and purchase new things for selling rather than waiting to see her son. She seems worried about the prices that have fallen dramatically and pays no heed to the values like her son, Eilif. Mother Courage misses the opportunity to see Eilif for the last time, because she gives priority to her profit than to her son.

Mother Courage: (To Yvette.) Come along, got to get rid of my stuff afore prices start dropping...  
(Calls into the cart.) Kattrin, church is off. I'm going to market instead.  
When Eilif turns up, one of you give him a drink. (viii. 228-232)

Thus at the end of the play Mother Courage's devotion to commerce rather than to family leaves her both emotionally and financially bankrupt (Galens, 1999, p.186). Brecht shows the duality of commerce and family as a negative consequence of war. That is, each time she leaves a child alone to make money she loses that child to the war in quest of profit. All her failure drivers from her state of ignorance— lack of knowledge. To illustrate this hypothesis, we see at the end of the play that Mother Courage in paying the peasants for Kattrin's burial extracts three coins from her purse but hands over only two putting one back. It can even be said that Courage abandons her daughter, Kattrin, in death since she leaves her daughter's burial to strangers and decides to get back in her business.

Mother Courage: (Harnessing herself to the cart.) Hope I can pull cart all right by myself.  
Be all right, nowt much inside it. Got to get back in business again. (xii. 39-41)

In every case Mother Courage in order to pursue her business with death, forgets all she knows and abandons her child. Though it was a soldier's bullet that ended each child's life, it was Courage who established the condition for their destruction, brought them to war and showed them the abyss. Her children have all been killed at her hands. She does not learn Brecht's lesson that "those who will make their cut from the war need a very big pair of scissors." (Jones, 1986, p.126) Brecht continues: In capitalism, the masses grow dehumanized. In *Mother Courage*, war is a capitalist system that makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. In so doing, masses in capitalism become emptied of their own content since they are reduced from a worker to a thing or in Marxian term, a commodity by the rulers. Thus, the rulers contribute their labors—the masses—to their own projects. This is because in capitalism the value of everything is calculated according to profitability.

Borrowing from the words of Foucault, he argues that knowledge is inextricably intermingled with relations of power and advances in knowledge are associated with developments on the exercise of power (Mills, 2003, p.58). He states, in an essay entitled "Prison talk", that it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power (Ibid., p.69). Foucault assumes that the development of knowledge necessarily makes people more powerful, and vice versa. I may conclude that Mother Courage's lack of knowledge leads to her state of powerlessness. Mother Courage is powerless and alienated in order to conduct a profitable business. Foucault, in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, discusses that power dominates people, but knowledge sets people free (Danaher, Schirato, & Webb, 2000). In Brecht's terms, "the war is the business of the big men who manipulate politics to their own advantage, exploiting mankind, making man's relationship with man primarily a business relationship." (Bloom, 2002, p.39) In so doing, Mother Courage as an alienated has no chance to compete with the authorities. By "alienation" I mean, she is powerless and her actions have no influence or control over the events. Meanwhile, due to Courage's lack of knowledge, her state of powerlessness becomes concretized within the play. James K. Lyon in his "Brecht Unbound" declares that Brecht's Marxist views caused him to look at Mother Courage as an alienated and powerless woman. Brecht illustrates: This is because war leads to exploit human beings (James & Breuer, 1995, p.246). When Brecht tells us that the little people cannot gain from their rulers' war, he alludes to exploitation (Brecht, 1978, p.94). In the play, Brecht brings out the image of her wagon by which she attains a degree of

power in her anti-human world. But at the end of the play when her wagon is almost empty, her illusion of power shatters and leads to a bitter contempt of powerlessness with a horrible sense of loss. Indeed, the image of emptiness of Courage's wagon stands for her exploitation.

Mother Courage is manifested as powerless in the sense that she cannot make any difference. She becomes astonished to hear her son's voice again, but she is powerless to take Eilif away from The General. Mother Courage says: My eldest boy Eilif. It's two years since I lost sight of him. They (the soldiers) pinched him from me on the road. (ii. 64-65)

In the third scene, Mother Courage and Swiss Cheese ignore knowing each other. She, at least, tries to make the arresting soldiers unsure of their catch. Because, Mother Courage is powerless to intervene only watching a struggle at the scene of taking Swiss Cheese away. She is desperate in the face of the political conditions surrounding herself and her children.

Sergeant: Here's where he came from. You know each other.

Mother Courage: Us? How?

Swiss Cheese: I don't know her. I got no idea who she is.

Sergeant: Trying to pretend you don't know each other, that it?

Mother Courage: Why should I know him? (iii. 419-422)

Her state of powerlessness reveals in another scene when Mother Courage appears outside an officer's tent, complaining to a Clerk that the army has destroyed her merchandise and charged her with an illicit fine. She plans to file a complaint with the captain. The Clerk responds that she ought to be grateful the soldiers let her stay in business.

The Clerk says: Better shut up. We're short of canteen, so we let you go on trading. (iv. 9-10)

In the sixth scene Kattrin, the daughter of Mother Courage, staggers back in, having been assaulted while bringing the merchandise back to her mother. At this time Mother Courage sighs and feels helpless because of her powerlessness. Her curse of war serves to intensify her insignificance.

Mother Courage to The Chaplain: The soldiers are bashing my daughter over the eye.

... She's dumb from war, soldier stuffed something in her mouth when she was little.

As for Swiss Cheese I'll never see him again, and where Eilif is God alone knows.

War be damned (vii. 267-271).

In his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault puts forth the systematic disciplining processes which are employed, with the use of both repressive and ideological forces, by the authorities to maintain a set of regulations so as to keep the masses under the control.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault's analysis reveals a human body as an object of knowledge and as a target for the exercise of power. The body, rendered as "docile", is shown to be related to a political field invested with power relations. Unlike Marxist understanding of power,

which employs an “economy” of power, and attributes agency to individuals, a Foucauldian understanding of power recognizes the identity as already engulfed in a network of power. That is to say that, the individual’s identity is the product of power (Shampa & Sheila, 2010, p.169). For Foucault, the first technology of power that emerges out of classical sovereignty is disciplinary power. Disciplinary power has the bodies under its gaze; it observes the bodies and produces knowledge about them, only in order to produce docile bodies. Discipline is the target of power which provides training for the individual. Discipline may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments and procedures. The main aspect of the disciplinary mechanisms of power concerns that of the disciplinary function of unceasing surveillance. That is, reporting the behavior of individuals throughout the entire social body performed by the institutions like police. Drawing on Bentham’s design for the panopticon method of control, Foucault argues for the significance of the “permanent possibility of visibility” as a general principle of exercising power over the body in an enclosed space (Fox, 1998). Foucault’s analysis encompasses all systematic, calculating forms of observation that are grounded in the multiple practices of examination. The authorities exercise surveillance over the bodies and, because they observe the mind of everyone, they are in a good position to gaze at the individual and make her a point of articulation for power. Thus, with the proper employment of power in disciplinary institutions, the controlled subjects operate as the authorities demand. The disciplining process aims at dissociating the individual power from bodies to turn them into “docile bodies” or proper subjects. Foucault points out four types of spaces which are registered in the process of distribution of power in order to produce subjected bodies or “docile bodies” who are meant to be transformed and trained. The subject is trained to act and acknowledge, as well as respond to the disciplinary interpellations made by an authoritative power. So, the subject’s goal becomes to serve the integrity of the authoritative system in the state.

Foucault differentiates the spaces of the distribution of power among the controlled subjects based on the goal they target in the system. The four types of spaces are: a space which requires enclosure or a place of disciplinary monotony, where conflicts with authorities must be avoided at all cost (Ibid., p.141). The second type of space deals with the process of elementary locationing and partitioning of the disciplined subject (Foucault, 1995, p.143). The aim of this space is to establish presences and absences to know how and where to locate the individual and to enable the authority, at each moment, to supervise the conduct of each individual and to calculate an individual’s qualities and merits. This disciplinary space is, in fact, a procedure aimed at knowing and mastering the subjects. The third type of space is intended to

correspond not only to the need to supervise, but also, to create a useful locus or place. Here, a mechanism is needed to provide a hold over the bodies by dissipating the individual’s illegal behaviors (Ibid.). The last type of space enhances disciplinary control through ranking and occupancy in classification. The place is neither the territory (unit of domination), nor the place (unit of residence). In Foucault’s opinion: “It individualizes bodies in a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them in a network of relations.” (Ibid., pp.145-146)

In the play, the initial reaction of *Mother Courage* to prevent recruiting her sons from joining the army creates panic for the Sergeant and the authorities. Due to the necessity to enlist soldiers for the war, the authorities find it wise to examine the behavior and to investigate the attitudes of *Mother Courage* intensively. The authorities’ project is to put *Mother Courage* and her family in a panoptic space to control them. The approach is to locate the breadwinner of the family, *Mother Courage*, in a proper space, and have the ability, at each moment, to supervise her conduct by various means of “disciplining.” Discipline demands a technique of power, which deals with the documentation of the individual’s behavior by institutions such as the army. That is, the authorities exercise power which is concerned with the gathering of information about *Mother Courage*. They examine and calculate her qualities to produce knowledge about her in order to produce docile bodies. Therefore, throughout the play, *Mother Courage* is considered as a docile body since the disciplinary space allocated to her provides the opportunity for the authorities to know and master her conduct and her fate. In the first scene, there is a long conversation between the Recruiter and the Sergeant with the intention of obtaining. The information they need to recruit and feed the machinery of war. In the opening scenes of the play, the Sergeant claims that war leads to organization, and order.

Sergeant: It’s too long since they had a war here; stands to reason. Where’s their sense of morality to come from? Peace—that’s just a mess; takes a war to restore order. (i. 12-13)

Apparently, this order is not based on a regular type of social contract; that is to say that, the rulers do not make contracts with the producers the way it ordinarily happens between the capitalist and the worker, but in effect, they take what they desire at the point of the sword. The Sergeant believes that by counting people and enlisting their names for the army they can maintain dominance and have control over the members of the society. *Mother Courage*, nevertheless, is annoyed by the constraints and control placed upon her activity through regulations. She mocks the Sergeant’s request for her identification papers, and sees that as a means of limiting her freedom. Her rejection of such control is made even clearer when the sergeant demands the license which would allow her to conduct business in the area controlled by the army.

Sergeant: Where's your papers?  
Mother Courage: Papers?  
Swiss Cheese: What, mean to say you don't know Mother Courage? (i. 65-68)

The members of the dominating class design a form of space not only to monitor the conduct of the members; but also, to create a useful place, where they can have a hold over the bodies with the aim of establishing presences and absences to know how and where to locate the bodies. In the play, this mechanism is utilized so as to identify the identities of people.

Sergeant: ... How many young blokes and good horses in that town there, nobody knows; they never thought of counting.... Folks hadn't got names to them, couldn't tell one another apart. Takes a war to get proper nominal rolls and inventories, and man and beast properly numbered and carted off, cause it stands to reason: no order, no war. (i. 18-25)

The authorities attempt to know Mother Courage and her family's identities and businesses in order to impose power over them. Information gives them power. When Mother Courage explains her epithet as "courage", the sergeant assumes that such an epithet shows Mother Courage's attitude as being obsessed with business and profit. The sergeant believes that Mother Courage must have been given the epithet of "Courage" probably because she must have had commercial gains in mind to have taken such a deadly risk to drive the cart right through violent bombardments to sell fifty loaves of bread.

Sergeant: (Blocking the way.) Who are you?  
Mother Courage: Business folk....  
Swiss Cheese: What, mean to say you don't know Mother Courage?  
Sergeant: Never heard of her. What's she called Courage for?  
Mother Courage: Courage is the name they gave me because I was scared of going broke,  
Sergeant, so I drove me cart right through bombardment of Riga with fifty loaves of bread. (i. 37-38, 67-73)

Foucault asserts that the power, exercised on the members of a society, contains a strategy (Heller, 1996, pp.87-88). It is this strategy that Foucault calls "panopticon", an intriguing method whereby the Sergeant exercises surveillance over the family and, observes the mind of everyone, to make the individuals "docile" for the articulation of power.

Recruiter: (To the Sergeant.) Do something.  
Sergeant: I always stay well in the rear. It can't be a trick: it gets her children. (i. 290-291)

Later on, after the soldiers fail to recruit Mother Courage's son for the army they come to know that she persistently tries to sell wares to the army. With this information, they fabricate a plot to buy a belt buckle and distract her from the issue of taking her son, Eilif, away through haggling over the price:

Mother Courage: All right, Katrin, all right. Sergeant's just paying (Bites the half-florin)...

And now let's get moving. Where's Eilif?  
Swiss Cheese: Went off with the recruiter. (i. 320-324)

As far as I perceive from the play, the rulers— The General, the Sergeant or the Recruiter— intend to exploit the masses for their own profit. It appears that wealth for the rulers comes not only from profits, in Marxist terms, resulting from the extraction of surplus value by through exploiting workers, but from more or less openly plundering the inhabitants of either their own or other's own or other people's territories.

## 2. POWER AND RESISTANCE

I have already mentioned that power is in direct relation to the concept of knowledge. Thus, in an essay entitled "The Subject and Power" Foucault tightens his emphasis on the role of power in the constitution of knowledge. That is, every point in the exercise of power is a site where knowledge is formed. On the other hand, Foucault's construction of power-knowledge is intended to conceptualize the embeddedness of knowledge of practices of control along with the related forms of resistance (Power, 2011). Foucault in his first volume of *The History of Sexuality* states that "where there is power there is resistance." (Foucault, 1978, p.95) In order for the relations to exist where power is exercised, there must always be someone who resists. By the same token, we can conclude that the concepts such as power, knowledge and resistance are intermingled with one another. Consequently, Foucault delineates:

Networks of power/knowledge are also sites of resistance, wherever mechanisms of power are mobilized, there are also opportunities for resistance. (Stoddart, 2007)

Now, I intend to discuss the historical implications of the concept of power in relation to resistance to prove what the significance of Mother Courage's resistance is in the entire semantic scheme of the play. In this regard, the Frankfurt School theorists emphasize that dominant class exercise power through ideology by providing a useful corrective to Marx's focus on economic production as the primary site of power, oppression and resistance (Ibid.). Obviously, ideological systems work to integrate people into social networks of oppression and subordination. Ideology or the linguistic tool of the hegemony is rooted, in Gramsci's words, in distinction between coercion and consent as alternative mechanisms of social power (Mann, 1984). Coercion refers to the State's capacity for violence, which it can use against those who refuse to participate in capitalist relations of production. By contrast, hegemonic power works, through ideology, to convince the individuals to subscribe to the social values and norms of an exploitative system. Coercive power is the exclusive domain of the State, the institutions of a "civil society," such as the army, which are largely responsible for production and dissemination of hegemonic power.

Hegemonic networks of power are the result of contestation between ruling elites and "subaltern" groups (Stoddart, 2007). The leading Marxist, Althusser, is concerned with the way that the state oppresses people, and the way that ideology constitutes people as individuals (Mills, 2003, p.34). He describes power as a discursive phenomenon and stresses the significant roles of ideologies in reproducing or changing political relations through the so-called ideological state apparatuses like the family, the state and even the army. On the contrary, when the relations of power are conceptualized in terms of struggle and, when the mechanisms through which power is exercised in terms of repression we have the repressive state apparatuses.

Unlike many earlier Marxist theorists who are concerned with focusing on oppression and take the notion that power is something which a group of people or an institution possesses, when power is only concerned with oppression and constraints, Foucault is interested in foregrounding resistance to power. Foucault insists on the correlativity of power and resistance. He foregrounds the fact that no use of power is ever inherently either power or resistance, just as no subject-position is ever inherently "hegemonic." (Heller, 1996, p.100) Resistance for Foucault is ultimately an expression of power for the following reasons:

- a) because all social formations produce both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic subject-positions; b) because no individual or group, no matter how hegemonic, can control all of a social formation's mechanisms of power; and c) because all power-mechanisms are potentially capable—in certain determinate political contexts— of being utilized counter-hegemonically. (Heller, 1996, p.102)

For all of these reasons, as soon as there is a power relation, there is the possibility of resistance, for if there are no possibilities of resistance— of violent resistance, escape, ruse, and strategies that reverse the situation—there would be no relations of power. Foucault sees resistance as the odd element within power relations. Resistance is what eludes power, and power targets resistance as its adversary (Rabinow, 1984, pp.207-209, 245). In this sense, power may form disciplined individuals, who are rational, responsible, productive subjects, yet that is in no way an expression of a human nature. Nevertheless, there is always at least some resistance to the imposition of any particular form of subjectivity, and thus resistance is concomitant with the process of "subjectification" (Pickett, 1996) Foucault defines power as transformative capacity, which is the ability of an individual to influence and modify the actions of other individuals. This idea that power is the transformative capacity of action is continued in those situations in which some agents have power over others in which power means domination. Power in this sense refers to an interaction where the transformative capacity is harnessed to the actors' attempts to get others to comply with their wants (Barbalet, 1985). The influence

on social relationships exerted by powerless agents derives precisely from their resistance to power. Foucault declares that power is exercised by means of 'discourse' not by particular individuals, but rather by institutions, social groups etc.. Then he adds:

Power is often conceptualized as the capacity of powerful agents to realize their will over the will of powerless people, and the ability to force them to do things which they do not wish to do. (Mills, 2003, p.35)

In *Mother Courage*, there is much struggle and repression between the rulers and Mother Courage when she shows resistance. Hence, the struggle drives from the exercise of power by the rulers over the ruled; in this case, Mother Courage. The army functions as a force of repressive execution and intervention in the interests of the ruling classes. It employs force, threat, execution and exploitation to take Courage's labor, for instance, her children.

Due to the smallness of her capital, Courage's social standing with regard to power is ambivalent. This is because she is always in danger of being pauperized in the system of capitalism. As a consequent, she offers resistance against the rulers. Each of her criticisms has some authority on its target. Her claim to material fulfillment for herself is on the dramatic level a revolt against the rulers and their agents in the military, and on the symbolic level, against the domination of patriarchy and capitalism. The distribution of power coincides with the distribution of wealth. The conflict between Mother Courage and the rulers fosters the impression that there is a broad social division in the play, a division between the powerful, represented by the military, and the powerless; the little people and the peasants (supplemented by Courage, and her children). Here some of the revolts are stirred up by Mother Courage who somehow subverts the totalitarian patriarchal system. For instance, Mother Courage refuses to give up her son's name to his executioners.

Mother Courage: You sure it was him?

Swiss Cheese: You must be thinking of someone else.

I saw someone bounding off with a bulge in his tunic. I'm the wrong man.

Mother Courage: I'd say it was a misunderstanding too, such things happen.

I'm a good judge of people. (iii. 442-447)

She resists the measures of patriarchal society that may control her movements. Mother Courage criticizes the chaplain's quietism in the third scene.

Mother Courage (to the Chaplain): And you, stop hanging round like Jesus on Mount of Olives, get moving. (iii. 599-600)

We never ran in church. Thank the Lord they're corruptible. (iii. 603-604)

She defines the Chaplain's behavior, as for Marx religion is an opiate for the little man. The Chaplain is also an



ideologue of capitalism. This is because he narrates parables to defend capitalism.<sup>1</sup>

Again, in the sixth scene, when Courage, sentenced by the Chaplain for living from war, reveals that he too lives from war and has a share from the profit, she unpacks the hypocrisy of the church which preaches to the little people to prosper and thrive on war. The hypocrisy of the church reveals itself in the words of its priest, the Chaplain:

The Chaplain: I'd say there's peace in war too; it has its peaceful moments.  
Because war satisfies all requirements (vi. 96-97)...

In the seventh scene, Courage criticizes war by undermining the rulers: She reveals that the war is paid for not by the rulers but by the little people. War, she utters, is only the rulers' ideological disguise to hide the truth that they are interested in a war of plunder to reap the profit.

Mother Courage: But what is war but private trading  
That deals in blood instead of boots? (vii. 7-8)

Foucault sees a direct connection between discourse and ideology. He delineates that where discourse is mobilized to reinforce systems of social power it functions as ideology.<sup>2</sup> There is a critical question to be answered. What is a discourse? MacDonnell states that dialogue is the primary condition of discourse. She adds that discourses such as groups of utterances which have a similar force or effect do not occur in isolation but in dialogues, in relation to or, more often, in contrast and opposition to other groups of utterances (Mills, 1997, p.11). Now, I intend to examine language and power across a variety of institutional settings, showing how institutions are formed and shaped by discourse and how they have the capacity to make and impose discourses and therefore impose discipline. In this way, I believe, they have considerable control over the shaping of subject's experiences or actions. Foucault expresses that "the subject is constituted by the rules of discourse." (Foucault, 1984, p.129) The institutions therefore have the power of discourse to foster particular kinds of identities to suit their own purposes. There have been three strands that are identified in the study of the relationship between discourse, institutions and power:

<sup>1</sup> See (iii. 466-509). When, the Chaplain sings the song of the Hours.

<sup>2</sup> Stoddart, *Ideology, Hegemony, Discourse*, 193. There have been many definitions for 'ideology' by writers especially Marxists. But my reading of the concept "ideology" is Althusserian. The concept of ideology has been discussed by Marxist writers, but I aim at employing repressive state apparatuses, since in my study the army functions as a force of repressive execution and intervention "in the interests of the ruling classes" mainly by the capitalists, I mean, those who are at the top and hold power, Mother Courage too is a capitalist, though. Taking these features into account, it is possible to represent the role of the repressive state apparatus, as it is consists essentially in securing by force (physical or mental) the political conditions of the reproduction of relations of production which are in the last resort relations of exploitation. Employing force, threat, execution to take Mother Courage's children are concrete examples supporting my hypothesis.

a) The study of how members of oppressed groups can discursively penetrate the institutionalized form of their oppression; b) how subordinate individuals 'discursively frame their own subordination' thereby perpetuating it; and c) analysis of how dominant groups discursively construct and reproduce their own positions of dominance. (Mayr, 2008, p.10)

Alongside discourse, as the tool of ideology, Fairclough takes "ideology into account as a meaning in the service of power." (Ibid., p.14) He considers ideology as a discursive tool serving the interests of certain social groups, ensuring that the behaviors of subjects are legitimate. Eagleton too considers ideology as a body of ideas, expressed in the language, of a particular social class which helps to legitimate a dominant political power so as to offer a position on a subject (Eagleton, 1991, p.1). And according to Althusser, the subject is made by discourse "the subject is construed as an ideological entity since the subject is simply a function of the rules of discourse." (Miller, 1990) My prominent reason for the choice of discourse is that the exercise of power is achieved through ideology, and more particularly through the ideological workings of language. Or what Eagleton calls, "the conjuncture of discourse and power."<sup>3</sup> Thus, ideology is the key mechanism of rule by consent, and since it is the favored vehicle of ideology, discourse is of considerable social significance in this relationship. My contention is that power is enacted and exercised in discourse and there are relations of power within discourse.<sup>4</sup>

I think that discourse displays the operation and distribution of power most clearly among the characters of the play. The play entails the fact that the rulers try to have control and dominance upon the bodies of the characters by limiting and obstructing their power. Examples of the exercise of power in a discourse where participants are unequal appear in the following scenes.

Sergeant: (Blocking the way.) Who are you?  
Mother Courage: Business folk....  
Sergeant: Who are you with, you trash?  
Eilif: Second Finnish Regiment. (i. 37-38)  
Recruiter to Sergeant: I smell insubordination in this individual.  
What's needed in our camp is obedience. (i. 92-93)  
Recruiter to Eilif: Pulling that cart like that. I s'pose you never get out of harness?  
Eilif: Ma, can I clobber him one? I wouldn't half like to. (i.140-142)  
Mother Courage: And I say you can't; just you stop where you are....  
Sergeant: God damn it, you're can't kid me. We're taking that bastard of yours for a soldier (i.234, 235)

<sup>3</sup> Terry Eagleton, *An introduction to ideology by Eagleton*, PP.1-2.

<sup>4</sup> I think it is important to mention that I am not trying to imply that power is only a matter of language. It is really dangerous to concentrate only on one aspect of social relation and reduce it to that aspect alone. There is no doubt that power exists and distributes in various modalities including the unmistakable modality of physical force which is known as power that is repressive and is exercised through depriving people of their wealth.

Notice that all the directive speech acts—orders and questions—in the example comes from the Sergeant. It is obvious that the Sergeant has the right to give orders and ask questions, whereas Mother Courage has only the obligation to comply and answer. This proves her subordinate position. In this scene, we see that force is implied in the expropriation of the Courage by the Sergeant and the Recruiter. Courage frustrates the sergeant's attempt to legitimize the recruitment of her children, though. One further striking feature of the superior and the subordinate, marked by the dots, is the number of times the Sergeant interrupts Mother Courage. The Sergeant interrupts her in order to control and have dominance upon Mother Courage and to ensure that she gives the expected information as he wants. In the first scene the Sergeant and the Recruiting officer attempt to recruit Mother Courage's sons Eilif and Swiss Cheese for the army, but Mother Courage resists and refuses to do so.

Sergeant: Those boys are healthy as young birch trees, I observe: Chests like barrels, solid leg muscles.  
So why are they dodging their military service, may I ask? (i. 147-150)  
Mother Courage: Nowt doing, sergeant. Yours is no trade for my kids.... Let him alone, will you?  
He's nowt for you folk. (i. 160)  
Mother Courage (to sergeant): Stop there! You varmint! I know you nothing but fight. (i. 166)

Those who hold power at a particular moment have to constantly reassert their power, and those who do not hold power are always liable to make a bid for power. There are various instances in which Mother Courage exercises more control over the discourse than one may expect, exceeding her discursive rights. Primarily, she challenges the Sergeant's questions instead of responding to them. Threat is also connoted in Mother Courage's answers: "Stop there! you varmint!" (i.147) Second, Mother Courage shows no sign of adapting her style of speech to the relatively formal setting. She appears to treat the Sergeant as a peer.

Sergeant: Who are you people, eh?  
Mother Courage: We're law-abiding folk. That's right. He bought a dinner.  
Said it was too salty.  
Sergeant: Trying to pretend you don't know each other, that it?  
Mother Courage: Why should I know him (Swiss Cheese)? Can't know everyone.  
I don't go asking 'em what they're called and are they a heretic; If he pays he ain't a heretic. You a heretic? (iii. 424- 431)

Generally speaking, since contestation is basic to the process of constituting hegemony, there is never a totalizing system of ideological domination. I mean, hegemony almost always exists in a state of tension and struggle. In the play, it is quite apparent that power is wrought with tension through coercion when power tries to take Mother Courage's sons and register them for the army. In the first scene, in order to save her children from joining the army, Mother Courage pulls a knife to put the Sergeant and the Recruiter back, but they do not

acknowledge her problem, and immediately ask another question that "how's anyone to have war without soldiers?" (i. 191) thus closing off Mother Courage's interpellation.

Mother Courage (to Swiss Cheese): Run off, calls out they're trying to kidnap your brother. (She pulls a knife.) Go on, you kidnap him, just try. I'll slit you open, trash.... We're doing an honest trade in ham and linen, and we're peaceable folk.  
Sergeant: Peaceable, I don't think; look at your knife.... Put that knife away, you old harridan.... How's anyone to have war without soldiers?  
Mother Courage: No need for it to be my kids. (i. 183-192)

In the fourth scene, Mother Courage appears outside an officer's tent, complaining to a Clerk that the army has destroyed her merchandise and charged her with an illicit fine. She plans to file a complaint with the captain. The Clerk responds that she ought to be grateful that the soldiers let her stay in business.

Mother Courage: But I got no complaint to make. Slashed everything in me cart to pieces with their sabres, they did, then wanted I should pay five taler fine for nowt, I tell you, nowt.  
The Clerk: Take my tip, better shut up. We're short of canteen, so we let you go on trading, especially if you got a bad conscience and pay a fine now and then. (iv. 4-11)

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## CONCLUSION

I argued that Mother Courage, the main character of *Mother Courage and Her Children*, the breadwinner of the family, failed to provide for her children financially by offering goods to the soldiers on both sides of the war. This was largely because Mother Courage was powerless. Borrowing from the words of Foucault, I think Mother Courage was powerless because of her "lack of knowledge." Her lack of knowledge meant that she was ignorant of the extant power struggle in the community that she lived and worked in. Mother Courage acted as a war profiteer and tried to make a profit from war; even though, she did not realize that, in a capitalist society, those at the top of the hierarchy of power have knowledge and power; and therefore, have a real chance of profiting from war. Furthermore, she did not have the required knowledge in order to be able to exercise her own subversive power against the ruling class. As a result she paid the price by losing all her children in quest of profit.

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