

Rancière's Political "Perceptible" and Perversions of Marxist Ideology:
An Analysis of Narrative Politics in Brecht, Bulgakov, and Ishiguro

Katherine Lindell

Submitted to the Department of English, Vanderbilt University,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the Major,

April 17, 2013

Table of Contents

I. An Introduction to the Politics of Literature.....	3
II. Brecht's <i>Threepenny Novel</i> and the <i>Verfremdungseffekt</i>	15
III. Bulgakov's Rebellion against Stalinist Repression in <i>The Master and Margarita</i>	39
IV. Professionalism and Blind Discipleship in Ishiguro's <i>The Remains of the Day</i>	66
V. Conclusions.....	75

Rancière's Political "Perceptible" and Perversions of Marxist Ideology: An Analysis of Narrative Politics in Brecht, Bulgakov, and Ishiguro

On the spectrum of literary criticism, the power of literature as rhetoric has been positioned in opposition to its existence as a self-referential entity. Whereas some critics argue that literature must communicate an authorial message to the novel's audience, others contend that the novel's form embodies its value as art. This project strikes a middle ground between these two extremes by arguing that a novel's narrative structure inherently connotes its political underpinnings. From Jean Paul Sartre's theory of rhetorical literature, the project explores the contentious opinions of Jacques Rancière and Louis Althusser – two Marxist literary critics who wrote prolifically in the years surrounding WWII. I explore the tension between these two critics, particularly their controversy over the role of intellectuals in spurring political revolution, by analyzing the narrative techniques of three novels – Bertolt Brecht's *Threepenny Novel*, Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*. Though Rancière insists upon the power of the masses to enact political revolution, I argue that such an orthodox Marxist attitude is too idealistic in the context of repressive post-war political regimes. Thus, my project advocates instead for Althusser's viewpoint which suggests that, with the help of political literature, individuals can break with the subjugation of ideology in favor of critical thinking and revolutionary ideas.

The writer is a speaker, he designates, demonstrates, orders, refuses, interpolates, begs, insults, persuades, insinuates. If he does so without any effect, he does not therefore become a poet; he is a writer who is talking and saying nothing.

- Jean Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?*

I. An Introduction to the Politics of Literature

The epigraph from Jean Paul Sartre assesses the value of prose in relation to the author's rhetorical ability to engage his readers and thereby to elicit a reaction from them. To "say nothing" is to forget the *power* of language to communicate by focusing solely on its poetic qualities; what distinguishes literature from every other form of writing is not the language that the prose author employs, but the purposes for which the author uses it.

With this conception of literature as a rhetorical entity, Sartre contextualizes the evolution of the novel in France since the seventeenth century in his book *What Is Literature*, marking each stylistic shift by prose writers' changing audiences:

In the seventeenth century the harmony between the man of letters and his readers was perfect; in the eighteenth century the author had two equally real publics at his disposal and could rely upon one or the other as he pleased. In its early stages, romanticism had been a vain attempt to avoid open conflict by restoring this duality and by depending upon the aristocracy against the bourgeoisie. But after 1850 there was no longer any means of covering up the profound contradiction which opposed bourgeois ideology to the requirements of literature. (Sartre 91)

As the seventeenth century's entrenched aristocracy slowly gave way to a literate bourgeois class at the turn of the eighteenth century, according to Sartre, writers encountered a dilemma related to these socio-economic divisions within French society. Literacy had become synonymous with

social elitism, and the growing bourgeoisie sought to have their attitude of superiority reflected in the literature of the time period. By 1850, however, revolutionary ideas permeated France once again, with a rising push for universal literacy and an empowered lower class, and from this political atmosphere, a “profound contradiction” originated around the motivations of prose authors. On one hand, Sartre notes that bourgeois elites contracted writers to inscribe within their texts a code of upper-class values, such as the inherent rights of the wealthy, the necessity of social classes, and the inability of “commoners” to achieve the refined civility of their superiors. And yet, though constrained by their economic needs, many writers sought to empower the rising lower classes within their literature. The contradiction, therefore, centered on the inability of writers to address, through literature, the audience that they wished to serve (Sartre 91).

Although the revolution would facilitate policies for universal literacy, writers nonetheless had to find a means of survival until that point. Sartre describes, in generalized terms, the plight of the French author: “Thus, he had to revert to the bourgeois public. Since he did not bring himself to do this, he lived in a state of contradiction and dishonesty, since he both knew and did not want to know *for whom* he was writing.... He made writing a metaphysical occupation, a prayer, an examination of conscience, everything but a communication” (Sartre 95). Dispossessed of their opportunity to address the audience for which they advocated, French writers had abandoned the communicative power of their prose by the middle of the nineteenth century. The Third Republic loomed, but a shift in literary technique would not take place without a newly empowered and literate public audience to receive it.

In his book, *The Politics of Literature*, Rancière echoes Sartre’s rhetorical theories and links the onset of literature’s aesthetic modernity with the rapidly changing politics of the early twentieth century. According to Rancière’s terminology, political activity depends solely upon a

change or reinforcement of the “distribution of the perceptible” (Rancière, *Politics of Literature* 4). “Perceptible,” in this case, refers to the practices and modes of speaking and acting which we associate with particular ideas and subjects. By altering the distribution of the perceptible, narrative aesthetics assert a new subject or idea as relevant to a particular social or political community. In his description of writers’ reactions to the French bourgeoisie, Sartre provides an example of Rancière’s argument in practice. In response to the social dominance of the bourgeoisie over creative freedom in France, the French writer fulfills his service to his readership, but not to their satisfaction. Sartre argues that writer begins to write “on principle *against all his readers*,” creating an environment of antagonism among French scholars – “And if, by chance, the book one published did not offend sufficiently, one added an insulting preface” (Sartre 91). Rancière would interpret this creative hostility as a manifestation of politics through literature. Frustrated with portraying the bourgeoisie as a lauded subject in literature, the writer could implicitly reject bourgeois superiority by changing the *narrative style* through which he portrayed such public figures.

From this broad definition of politics, Rancière argues his central hypothesis: “It is on this basis that it is possible to theorize about the politics of literature ‘as such,’ its mode of intervention in the carving up of objects that form a common world, the subjects that people that world, and the powers they have to see it, name it, and act upon it” (Rancière, *Politics of Literature* 7). Political literature, rather than necessarily embodying an explicit ideology, can alter the distribution of the perceptible by representing preexisting subjects and ideas in a new way – a representation which catches readers off guard by its unorthodox interpretation of the world.

From this theoretical framework, Rancière divides literary history into three analytical periods of artistic interpretation, each defined by a newly-redistributed “perceptible” of artistic value – the ethical regime, the poetic regime and, most recently, the aesthetic regime. Realism, as a narrative literary technique, embodied the pluralistic underpinnings of aesthetic modernity. The contemporary idea that true art could originate from any source and through any creative process directly opposed the preceding poetic regime, which depended upon a hierarchy of artistic representation, outside of which no artistic expression could be assigned artistic value. The hierarchy of representation conceived of certain “high subjects” as worthy of erudite discourse, while relegating lower themes and ideas to less distinguished manners of expression. Conversely, artistic value within the regime of aesthetic modernity rested upon the quality of stylistic expression, regardless of a literary work’s subject matter. That is to say, the wave of realism which coincided with aesthetic modernity brought “radical egalitarianism” to the forefront of literary composition (Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics* 10), appropriating high style to the most common aspects of everyday living. Political philosophies could now be represented through the unsophisticated vernacular of lowly, fictional citizens, while the act of domestic housekeeping could be portrayed through the voice of the highest aesthetic modes. Authors of this new literature redistributed the “perceptible” of the poetic regime by representing subjects that literature had previously disregarded.

In light of these analytical regimes, Rancière, like Sartre, recognizes the literary significance of France’s transition to the Third Republic, and he positions Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* in the context of a “redistribution of the perceptible” prompted by the revolution of 1870. Flaubert took the egalitarian impulses of his surrounding culture to a nearly utopian level, stylizing even the minutest details of his novel with the highest aesthetic modes of

discourse. Nevertheless, as this new democratic theory inspired a new aesthetics in literature, Flaubert feared that it also threatened the consideration of realist literature as a sophisticated, artistic form. Thus, Flaubert's novel reveals the inherent contradictions of the aesthetic regime. Rather than eradicating romanticism's hierarchy of subject matter and language, this groundbreaking literature simply established a *new* hierarchy, a new dominant form of analysis and classification of literature in its highest form. In response to the trend of a more inclusive "egalitarian" range of subject matters, literary scholars and writers developed a new degree of superiority in the quest for "literariness."

In his essay "Why Emma Bovary Had to Be Killed," Rancière highlights Flaubert's political concerns and defines the "democratic threat" to literature as Flaubert's motivation for conceiving the death of his novel's main character:

Emma's death is a literary death. She is sentenced as a bad artist, who handles in the wrong way the equivalence of art and nonart. Art has to be set apart from the aestheticization of life. It is not only a question of preserving Art from vulgar people. Instead it will become more and more a question of preserving it from refined people. (Rancière, "Bovary" 240)

Not only does Flaubert wish to defend the artistic sphere from the unrefined common people of his new French democracy, but he also wants to maintain art's separation from those inexperienced individuals who, though refined, lack the training to produce or identify pure Art. In fact, Flaubert's anxiety stretches beyond a particular socio-economic class of his culture, and subsumes the entirety of French population not categorized as the artistic or literary elite. For individuals like Emma, to be captivated by literature is to be inspired to assign artistic value

indiscriminately to the objects of one's life, and it is this impulse which Flaubert hopes to eradicate.

Moreover, Flaubert turns to a different character, Emma's lover Rodolphe, in order to underscore an aesthetic alternative to her. Rodolphe's attitude toward art – and his reaction against Emma's unsophisticated approach to it – identifies him as Flaubert's ideal literary consumer. Although Rodolphe, like Emma, craves the exhilaration of a clandestine affair, he never loses sight of his place in society or the power of his language. From the outset of his presence in the novel, Rodolphe represents a bridge between Emma's provincial environs and the civilized life she strives to enter. The narrator describes his style: "It was that mingling of the everyday and the exotic, which the vulgar, usually, take for the symptom of an eccentric existence, of unruly feeling, of the tyranny of art, always with a certain scorn for social conventions which they find seductive or exasperating" (Flaubert 128). By combining exoticism with his appearance as a common man, Rodolphe can operate within provincial society while still embodying the hierarchy inherent in his more refined lifestyle. The "tyranny of art" that the narrator describes opposes the democratic notions pervading French society at the time, while still emphasizing the availability of art for those who are trained to appreciate it. Rodolphe appreciates the "exotic" nature of art and can incorporate it into his own style without breaking the hierarchy of artistic understanding.

In addition, Rodolphe's reaction to Emma's misuse of art demonstrates his noble pretensions towards the artistic hierarchy. Recognizing her mimetic, irrational expectations, he can no longer justify his attraction for her: "He had heard such stuff so many times that her words meant very little to him. Emma was just like any other mistress; and the charm of novelty, falling down slowly like a dress, exposed only the eternal monotony of passion, always the same

forms and the same language” (Flaubert 177). Rodolphe thus experiences the consequences of the “democratic threat.” Emma’s use of flowery language – her attempts to mimic the literature that she reads in her everyday life – numbs him to the artistic excellence of the words themselves. Art, through Emma’s unrefined consumption, has lost its power as Art, and Rodolphe refuses to prolong the affair once he realizes the extent of this artistic injustice. The conclusion of the affair, along with Emma’s cruel death, reveal Flaubert’s imperative for a sustained artistic hierarchy within his modern, democratic world.

In contrast to this convincing account of *Madame Bovary*, however, Rancière’s theory of “new poetics” and politics falls curiously flat in his analysis of the overtly political German playwright, Bertolt Brecht, particularly due to the playwright’s method of allegorical production and changing political views. Rancière observes, “From *The Threepenny Opera*, which delighted those it hoped to thrash, to *Mother Courage and Her Children*, which moved those it was supposed to outrage, via *The Decision*, which was rejected by the Party it exalted, Brecht never stopped missing his mark...as much in terms of his own aims as in the interests of the movement he claimed to serve” (Rancière, *Politics of Literature* 102). Puzzled by this apparent political malfunction within the playwright’s work, Rancière condemns Brecht’s purported loyalty to Marxist ideology through a number of orthodox Marxist lenses – the contradiction between morality and science, the militant attitudes toward capitalist consumption, and the politics of mass production as related to theatrical production in an aesthetic sense. Ultimately, however, Rancière concludes that Brecht’s flaw rests on his use of allegory and his insistence on revealing “truth” through “the identical nature of opposites” – a tactic which prevents audiences from interpreting the politics of the play beyond its representation of the obvious (Rancière, *Politics of*

Literature 127). According to Rancière, this politics of certainty undermines the rhetorical power of Brecht's works by eliminating his audience's interpretative obligation.

However, at odds with Rancière's critique stands the theory of his Marxist contemporary, Louis Althusser, who advances the idea that a true *redistribution* of the perceptible cannot be achieved as long as the institutional framework of a society persists. Throughout his essay, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation," Althusser describes the process by which dominant classes solidify their standing within a societal structure. While a new ideology can win group support – or, to borrow from Rancière, can *alter* the distribution of the perceptible in favor of a new political idea – this idea cannot *redistribute* the society's understanding of politics unless it is reproduced within the mentality of society's subjected, subservient classes. To facilitate this necessary perpetuation of power, therefore, dominant classes utilize not only the "(Repressive) State Apparatus" to assert their governmental superiority over their people, but also "Ideological State Apparatuses" in order to engrain their ideology within the masses, even in seemingly politically independent environments. Althusser elaborates on this distinction:

...while there is *one* (Repressive) State Apparatus, there is a *plurality* of Ideological State Apparatuses...it is clear that whereas the – unified – (Repressive) State Apparatus belongs entirely to the *public* domain, much the larger part of the Ideological State Apparatuses (in their apparent dispersion) are part, on the contrary, of the *private* domain. (Althusser 144)

For example, while an authoritarian ruler can enforce legal consequences on the subjects of his regime, he can prevent the need for such brute force through the indoctrination of his subjects through political propaganda distributed surreptitiously through educational systems and

periodical publications. In this way, ideology's influence can be found in every aspect of a society's structure, subjecting its citizens unknowingly to the political thought of the dominant class.

It follows that, from Althusser's point of view, literature is an Ideological State Apparatus, and authors, the agents of strengthening or debasing the "perceptible" politics of society as defined by the state. Revolution can be fueled by the words of intellectuals, and thus literature is an expedient form of political change. However, following public uprisings in France in 1968, Rancière publicly decried Althusser's ideas in a book entitled *Althusser's Lesson*. Recognizing the same bourgeois contradictions that had littered Flaubert's groundbreaking realist texts, Rancière argued that Althusser had utilized his respected professorial role to advance a conception of intellectual elitism at the expense of traditional Marxist principles. Rancière argues against Althusser's elitism in the reality of revolutionary France:

All his 'subversive' theses, however, share the following interesting peculiarity: they never entail any disruptive practices... This is a well-known kind of freedom, the very kind the bourgeoisie reserves for intellectuals: the freedom to say anything and everything at the university, where intellectuals can be Marxists, Leninists, even Maoists, provided they perpetuate its functioning: the freedom to wax ironic about the power that channels the intellectual's attachment to order. That is one bourgeois lesson the leaders of the Communist Party have finally learned. (Rancière, *Althusser's Lesson* 112)

Thus, the conflict between these two eminent Marxist scholars stems from the incongruity between *order* and *revolution*. Rancière continues: "[Althusser's] discourse claims that it is 'the masses which make history,' but it does so only the better to cement the power of the ones who

say so, the ones who decree from their armchairs that these words are bourgeois, those proletarian” (Rancière, *Althusser’s Lesson* 115). Marxist political thought, according to Rancière, should not instate a new hierarchy with the eradication of the old, and Althusser’s claims for the role of intellectuals in revolution subverts the proletarian empowerment of the original Marxist texts.

However, as Rancière argues that intellectuals have no place in revolution, he reveals his own naïveté. Rather than assessing Brecht’s theatre as a response to the totalitarian regimes of Europe during the interwar and post-WWII years, Rancière critiques it for revealing the “impotence of truth” (Rancière, *Politics of Literature* 127) and for perpetuating a continued class structure under the guise of Marxist liberation. Rancière’s “politics” of Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* and, above all, his orthodox insistence on the revolutionary power of the masses, fail in assessing Brecht’s use of ideology in a post-WWII setting, and it is on this point that I advance my thesis for the remainder of this project.

Surrounded by a population steeped in the ideology of a rampant dictator and unaware of its victimization as such, Brecht formulates a new method of theatrical production whose execution is inherently political. A theatrical narrative technique known in scholarly literature by its German terminology, the *Verfremdungseffekt* has been characterized by estrangement, distancing, alienation, and a variety of other adjectives that fall short of explaining its power over readers and viewers. Sean Carney explains the implications of this effect in his book, *Brecht and Critical Theory*, from the point of view of Althusser:

For Althusser, this is the activity of the *Verfremdungseffekt*: an overall politicization of the theatre through a psychoanalytic estrangement of theatrical discourse. The *Verfremdungseffekt*, which Althusser prefers to translate ‘as an

effect of displacement or separation,' must not be understood merely as an effect of theatrical techniques, but as a general effect of the revolution in theatrical practice. It consists not in changing places, in displacing a few little elements in the work of actors...It thus consists in an assemblage of displacements, which constitutes this new practice. (Carney 16)

From this commentary, we can view Brecht's methodology of theatre, much more than the content of his creative works, as altering Rancière's "distribution of the perceptible," but with a result far different from Flaubert's subtle condemnation of his novel's main character and namesake. Brecht's plays, as well as in a multitude of literary works written after his worldwide recognition, imply that the distribution of the perceptible cannot subvert the reproduction of ideology which has occurred in the oppressive regimes of the Second World War. Rather, as Althusser's assessment states, Brecht's work represents a conflation of displacements, a set of rhetorical strategies designed to leave his audience unsettled – aware of their presence within ideology, but uncertain of their subsequent course of action. Indeed, Brecht need not assume a particular political stance simply because he has adopted the traditionally moralistic form of allegory. He approaches the German public at their height of ideological subjugation, exposes the truth of their political submission, frames this condemnation in the terms of their own reality, and leaves them to decipher the solution to their plight.

Moreover, the alienation effect pioneered by Bertolt Brecht remains evident in authors' interpretation of World War II politics within the various countries of Eastern and Western Europe. Beginning with Brecht's *Threepenny Novel*, I will demonstrate how, in the one novel he authored, Brecht applied his estrangement technique by physically altering the novel's textual presentation, and how this surface alienation signaled his moments of ideological discourse.

From there, I will extend the applications of this alienating politics to the interwoven stories of Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. By evaluating the mimetic structures of the novel, I will reveal the effect of Bulgakov's satire as a function of politics, while also emphasizing the role of stylistic-linguistic modes in alienating the reader. Finally, I will transition to Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, exploring the more sedate, but still apparent alienating nature of his narrative style, especially in relation to his main character, Stevens. In each of these cases, the politics of Marxism and its potential for perversion remain apparent, and the warnings against such political outcomes consistently appear in each of the works.

*You are convicted! Nothing but misrepresentation!
You have spread lies! Therefore I condemn you!
As an accessory! And all who pass it on, all who dare
to relate such things, I condemn! To death! And I'll
go further: whoever listens to it and dares to refrain
from taking immediate steps against it, him also I
condemn! And since I, too, have listened to this
parable and said nothing, I condemn myself to death!*

- George Fewkoombey, *Threepenny Novel*

II. Brecht's *Threepenny Novel* and the *Verfremdungseffekt*

To position my own thesis between the polemic of Rancière and Althusser, I begin with an analysis of Bertolt Brecht's first and only novel, *Threepenny Novel*, which was published in Denmark in 1934, almost immediately after Brecht's escape from the Nazi takeover of Germany in 1933. With the characters from his acclaimed play, *Threepenny Opera*, Brecht adapts a new plot line to address his growing concerns toward the fate of his nation, creating a professional, capitalist microcosm within a world of London's social outcasts and tracking the fate of materialism on that world's rich and poor members. But many aspects of the work should strike readers as abnormal. Why would an accomplished playwright of more than fifteen years suddenly switch to a different genre, and why would he only make one attempt at such artistic expression? More importantly, what is the relation between this novel's creation and Brecht's exile from his native country? By analyzing Brecht's artistic goals in the context of his experimentation with theatre, film, and literature, we gain insight into the historical background of *Threepenny Novel* and, as a result, understand more clearly the purpose of Brecht's application of *Verfremdungseffekt* to the novel.

In the early years of his career, Brecht felt dissatisfied with the public's reception of his productions and understood that theatre's reputation as a form of entertainment undermined the

social critique of each of his plays. Recognizing the insidious nature of ideology within the German public, Brecht set out to develop a mode of artistic expression that would prompt the masses to break with dominant ideology. His ultimate solution rested on the novel, which could interact with readers through explicit written dialogue rather than a “performance” of social critique that an audience might misinterpret as mere amusement. In the struggle to give his art political significance, Brecht created a formulaic, yet complex, commentary on propaganda, the origin of successful leadership, and the dangers of misinformed assumptions – all as a warning to populations who had not experienced the power of ideology as a tool for mass subjugation.

From the outset of his career, Brecht sought, above all else, to expose the hierarchical, bourgeois aesthetics of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century and consequently to endow art with a social function. Critics often point out the inconsistencies in Brecht’s theatrical practice, from changes in his theoretical aims to political contradictions within his body of work, as evidence of his shortcomings as a playwright. However, daily entries in Brecht’s journals reveal that these inconsistencies were not the product of negligence but rather index the evolution of Brecht’s thought during Germany’s social upheaval between the First and Second World Wars. Darko Suvin elaborates on the aesthetic system against which Brecht operated in his essay, “The Mirror and the Dynamo: On Brecht’s Aesthetic Point of View”: “In most of the 19th and in the early 20th centuries, [bourgeois aesthetics] rested on twin axioms of *individualism* – conceiving the world from the individual as the ultimate reality, and *illusionism* – taking for granted that an artistic representation in some mystic way directly reproduces or ‘gives’ man the world” (Suvin 59) For example, in applying these concepts to Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, especially through Rancière’s aesthetic lens, we see that Flaubert channels his anxieties through one tragic character, Emma Bovary, in an effort to warn his audiences of the dangers of the

broad aesthetic power which had been bestowed upon the masses by democracy. Thus, by embodying his fears in an individual's experience, one can argue that Flaubert hopes to "give [his audience] the world." Yet Brecht remains completely skeptical of such a strategy.

Instead, Brecht advocates for a dynamic artistic approach to theatre, embodied in the *Verfremdungseffekt* – a method of prompting the audience to examine its subjectivity under ideology. Much like Althusser, Brecht feared the self-propagating nature of ideology and saw art as a source of either positive or negative feedback into a society's existing apparatus of ideology. In one of his journal entries, he describes the public's role in accomplishing his new vision for theatre: "It is understood that the *radical transformation of the theatre* can't be the result of some artistic whim. It has simply to correspond to the whole radical transformation of the mentality of our time...it is precisely theatre, art and literature which have to form the 'ideological superstructure' for a solid, practical rearrangement of our age's way of life" (*Brecht on Theatre* 23). Just as Althusser recognizes that ideological, as well as state-run, apparatuses reinforce the popular interpretation of and submission to the dominant ideology of a society, Brecht, too, understands these political structures and strives to subvert them to benefit his ideologically subjugated audiences. However, such universal subjugation demanded a universal response to subvert it, and art could not initiate such a widespread reaction, according to Brecht, without a dramatic change in the modes of artistic representation.

As a result, Brecht counteracts the individualism of the bourgeois novel with his notion of epic theatre, an aesthetic mode adapted to the discovery of truth via the "dialectic of theatre." What Rancière terms the "impotence of truth" in the playwright's works, Brecht explains as a method of exposing contradictions by imposing a critique of all subjects within a production. By critiquing every social structure in the play without providing a conclusive narrative judgment,

Brecht requires his audience to examine these contradictions and form their own opinions about the meaning of the work itself. Suvin explains Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* in terms of the playwright's own aesthetic goals: "Using the language of dialectical estrangement to master the alienated world, Brecht's mature aesthetic is not based on pure idea. It is in a permanent two-way relation of theory to practice, and may therefore be claimed as anti-ideological" (Suvin 67). Indeed, in this relation of theory to practice, Brecht often alienates his spectators by mixing a "view from below" perspective of the common man who experiences the contradictions of his ideological environment, and a "view from above" in which characters break away from the action to narrate the absurdity of such contradictions. In this way, the audience becomes aware of not only the realistic ambiguities within their daily lives, but also the critical, intellectual arguments against such contradictions. As Suvin argues, Brecht's "critical attitude" from below presents an attitude of skepticism towards what Althusser would term the "Repressive State Apparatus," while Brecht's "rationalist view" from above guides the text in a search for values which can be sustained through the text, outside of these power structures, in order to validate his aesthetic principle (Suvin 66-7).

Perhaps the best illustration of Brecht's theory-practice feedback loop is the parallel that he draws from epic theatre to scientific experimentation. In his book, *Bertolt Brecht and Critical Theory*, Steve Giles evaluates the influence of science on Brecht's artistic theory. Referencing Brecht's journal response to contemporary sociological studies, Giles reveals the similarities between scientific objectives and Brecht's artistic vision:

Brecht observes that a sociological experiment must *provoke* contradictions which are immanent in society, so as to make them perceptible. The material thus produced is alive and not simply an object of contemplation, just as the viewer is

inextricably located *within* societal processes....This latter condition also applies to the instigators or organizers (*Veranstalter*) of sociological experiments, who themselves occupy a position in the force-field of contradictory social interests. Because of this, they cannot avoid adopting a subjective, partisan viewpoint....Clearly Brecht rejects out of hand the demand that sociology be value free, but it is also vitally important to note that he does *not* draw the logical empiricist conclusion that a politically committed sociology must therefore be unscientific. (Giles 75-6)

Indeed, this quote could be interpreted as a direct summary of Althusser's argument. All individuals, regardless of their artistic aspirations or ideological skepticism, are "always already" subjects of ideology. Simply by maturing within a particular society, Althusser argues that each individual adopts a particular ideological stance regardless of his consciousness or willingness to do so. Brecht undoubtedly agrees with this, and yet he refuses to concede that such an ideological predisposition prevents an individual from discovering the truth.

This tension between ideological bias and the search for truth brings Brecht's conception of epic theatre into the scientific realm. Since both spectator and artist are located within a specific ideology, it is the job of the artist to accumulate facts of this ideological subjugation and assemble them within a dramatic work – not for the aesthetic pleasure of the audience, but rather for their "dialectical estrangement." Brecht claims in his journal: "...once illusion is sacrificed to free discussion, and once the spectator, instead of being enabled to have an experience, is forced as it were to cast his vote; then a change has been launched which goes far beyond formal matters and begins for the first time to affect the theatre's social function" (*Brecht on Theatre* 39). Rancière, of course, would argue that this interpretation of ideological estrangement

privileges the intellectual over the subjugated masses, thus breaking with Marx's original principles. However, Brecht cannot trust that his readership, without the deliberate alienation incorporated in his works, will reject their prevailing ideology unassisted. Brecht no longer hopes to define "good theatre" as those works which receive public acclaim; instead, he wants to unsettle his audience, to break with their expectations for theatrical composition, and consequently to encourage their own critical stance towards the ideology within which they exist.

Not surprisingly, the saga of the *Threepenny Novel* stems from the widely-lauded production of Brecht's play, the *Threepenny Opera*, in 1928. The play achieved immediate notoriety, delighting audiences while also, according to Brecht and many of his later critics, accomplishing his objective to "[propagate] truth" (*Brecht Art and Politics* 153). Brecht explains the reasons behind the play's popular acclaim and theoretical success:

The *Threepenny Opera* is concerned with bourgeois conceptions not only as content, by representing them, but also through the manner in which it does so. It is a kind of report on life as any member of the audience would like to see it. Since at the same time, however, he sees a good deal that he has no wish to see; since therefore he sees his wishes not merely fulfilled but also criticized...he is theoretically in a position to appoint a new function for the theatre. (*Brecht on Theatre* 43)

Within this commentary, Brecht sheds light onto the aesthetic power of the alienation effect. Not only do his characters live out the contradictions of dominant bourgeois culture and politics, which many of his spectators would have shared, but the language of his play presents those characters in light of their own contradictions, makes these problems visible, and impels the audience to draw its own conclusions. Moreover, in contrast to the precedent set by the

bourgeois novel, Brecht hoped to remove his own experience from the lives and motivations of his characters. He did not want to represent *his* world; he wanted to represent the world in a scientific, objective manner, recognizing its inherent biases without tainting his discourse with a single, ideological perspective.

Nevertheless, by the 1930s, German society was predisposed to view theatre as an activity for pleasure, rather than an endeavor for socio-political enlightenment. Indeed, Brecht's aspirations "to appoint a new function for the theatre" proved impractical. Perhaps members of the lower class who attended Brecht's plays were stunned by the truth of his characters' contradictions, but the work hardly altered theatre's source of value for its spectators. In fact, Rancière's entire critique rests upon the playwright's idealized expectations: "Brecht's great faith that nothing will ever change as long as the relationships of production aren't changed justifies both his lucid look at the fact that they have still not really been changed anywhere – so that everywhere venality still reigns – and his allegiance to those who, at the very least – have set themselves that transformation as a goal" (*Politics of Literature* 114). As Rancière elaborates later, Brecht's ambitious desire to imbue theatre with a pedagogical function results in a blatant political message too polarizing to affect change.

However, Rancière conveniently ignores the next stage of the *Threepenny* saga: Brecht's quest to adapt the greatest commercial success of his career to the medium of film. Recognizing the film industry as a relatively new mode of production with widespread popularity, Brecht theorized that the public's preconceived attitudes towards this industry's aesthetic function could be sufficiently malleable to accept his vision for pedagogical media. In Brecht's opinion, film accomplished naturally what he had strived to incorporate into theatre for years because, in a movie "...the content becomes, technically speaking, an independent component, to which text,

music and setting ‘adopt attitudes’” (*Brecht on Theatre* 39). The spectator’s “experience” is much more isolated from the action while viewing a film than while witnessing a live performance, and in this way, the mode of production, even more so than the content of the work’s message, prompts a more complete alienation of the audience. Giles describes Brecht’s motivations for adapting his work to film: “Characters in films are, [Brecht] argues, simply types, who are put into specific situations and therefore take on particular attitudes, rather than being individuals motivated by a rich inner life or substance... it has the considerable advantage that it can provide practical knowledge by virtue of its inductive method and thereby bring art into the realm of social science” (Giles 74). Although modern readers may balk at such a simplification of films, the movies of Brecht’s day fulfilled just this format, with a basis in plot elements rather than the psychology of individual characters. Therefore, in order to spread his extreme Marxist views to the German public, Brecht reused the characters and most basic plot elements of his *Threepenny Opera* and augmented his political convictions in a new screenplay. With film’s emphasis on external action, together with the residual fame of his theatrical work, Brecht hoped to facilitate the public’s willing reception of his message on an ideological, alienating level.

Brecht’s theoretical plans, however, were quickly impeded by the bureaucracy of copyright infringement and the threat of censorship. Giles narrates this artistic conflict within his book, and emphasizes its importance to Brecht’s artistic development. As Brecht composed a politically-charged screenplay of the *Threepenny Opera*, he simultaneously arranged a contract with Germany’s well-known film production company, Nero-Film, hoping to capitalize on the firm’s renown in order to achieve the broadest possible base of viewers. However, fearful of the blatantly-Marxist elements of Brecht’s script, the directors refused to produce the screenplay in

its current state, despite their agreement to do so during contractual negotiations. Brecht claimed his creative freedom over the screenplay's content; the company asserted their rights to the script as film producers. The resulting lawsuit between Brecht and the Nero-Film company, in addition to being the most widely-publicized intellectual property lawsuit to have occurred at that time, also confirmed Brecht's own assumptions about the political significance of the film industry (Giles 15). Giles summarizes the public reaction to this controversy: "The *Dreigroschenoper* case attracted enormous interest from the artistic avant-garde and generated a good deal of public debate...film and cinema had a particular resonance in the cultural and intellectual wrangles of German society at this time. It was felt that the mass distribution of film gave it a far greater impact on public opinion than could be achieved by books or plays" (Giles 13). This lawsuit, which took place in 1930, not only foiled Brecht's attempts once again to instill his political discourse within the artistic sphere, but also reignited his frustration with the ideological reproduction of power which had overtaken German society.

Furthermore, as the Weimar Republic neared its collapse under the Nazi regime, Brecht reached a crisis of artistic creation shared by many of Germany's leading writers of the time. Theodore Rippey explains the artistic upheaval which accompanied the country's dramatic government shift: "the understanding of literature as a reflection of and intervention into society, a notion of *Gegenwartbindung* to which even experimental writers had clung (consciously or not) in the Weimar years, was dealt a death blow by the events and fallout of 1933" (Rippey 46). Moreover, referencing Brecht's reaction to the effects of Germany's ideological subjugation, Rippey concludes, "...his model of progressive collectivism was undone by his misjudgment of the collectivist subject's capacity to draw critical distinctions amid the affective effervescence of mass formations" (Rippey 49). In this way, the film industry's censorship of Brecht's screenplay,

along with the growing proof of Germany's blind adherence to destructive ideology, formed seemingly insurmountable opposition to Brecht's conflation of politics and art.

In the context of this opposition, Brecht resolved to write his *Threepenny Novel*, a stylistically simple, but fundamentally important application of his alienation theory. Using his screenplay as the novel's first draft, Brecht confessed his renewed hope that literature, colored by the newness of film technique, could finally meet his artistic-political goals:

The film cannot depict any world (the 'setting' in which it deals is something quite different) and lets nobody express himself (and nothing else) in a work, and no work express any person. What it provides (or could provide) is applicable conclusions about human actions in detail...Literature needs the film not only indirectly but also directly. That decisive extension of its social duties which follows from the transformation of art into a pedagogical discipline entails the multiplying or the repeated changing of the means of representation. (*Brecht on Theatre* 48)

Film provided a mode of representation that was not engrained, like theatre, in the notion of entertainment alone, but because of the genre's suitability for propaganda, authorities and producers heightened their censorship of new productions. The novel provided a middle ground between the two extremes. Thus, although *Threepenny Novel* was a last-minute composition (published within a year of Brecht's exile from Germany on the grounds of political subversion), it remains a key component of the evolution of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* from its limited application in theatrical production. Literature "needed" film in a stylistic sense. Unable to realize his vision through the film industry's new mode of production, Brecht instead resorted to a traditional means of production, and sought instead a new *means of representation*. His

aesthetic design of the novel reveals the new politics of his literature, a method in conflict with Rancière's "re-distribution of the perceptible," but nonetheless vital to authors' political responses during the interwar and post-WWII years of literary production.

Well aware of the German public's docile submission to Hitler's empty promises of peace, Brecht uses *Threepenny Novel* to examine the process through which ideology becomes a determinant of public behavior. He writes in one of his journals that "Fascism is a historic phase which capitalism has entered into....In Fascist countries capitalism only survives as Fascism, and *Fascism can only be resisted as capitalism, as the most naked, brazen, oppressive, and deceitful form of capitalism*" (*Brecht on Art and Politics* 145). Perceiving the connection between commerce and totalitarian reign, Brecht merges criminality and business acumen in the novel's hero to examine the ideological subjugation of the masses. According to his theory of politics through film, Brecht establishes each of his characters as types, embodying within each of them a particular social class or mode of thinking which does not waver for the entirety of the novel. Additionally, he instills contradictions between these characters' motivations and actions, without which the ideological alienation of his readers cannot succeed. More importantly, Brecht alienates parts of the text itself by using italicized type – a technique originating in his personal journals – as a signal that readers should examine such passages carefully. These italics span different characters and different modes of speech: interior monologues, direct dialogue, and even moments of free indirect discourse. The universality of italicized moments implies the role of the author in embodying ideology throughout the novel, and for this reason, their appearance provides a physical sign of the *Verfremdungseffekt* in practice.

In this way, Brecht's aesthetic premise finally achieves the political significance for which he strived. Though the novel's cast of characters is extensive, three individuals typify the

city's societal structure: Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum, Mr. MacHeath, and the impoverished soldier, George Fewkooombey. Peachum and MacHeath, both commercial leaders of London, achieve professional distinction by exploiting the thoughtless lower class with their persuasive ideology. In spite of these similarities, however, MacHeath clearly triumphs as a superior businessman because of his perpetual critique of the status quo, while Fewkooombey's ignorance dooms him to a wrongful death. However, Brecht's socio-political experiment does not simply conclude with the success of characters who disseminate ideology and the failure of those who blindly accept it. Polly Peachum, whose obsession with sexuality functions as her only "ideology," thrives among the controlling male influences of her life. Her ultimate financial equality with the business leaders of the novel overturns readers' expectations for the power dynamic of Brecht's fictional society and reinforces the author's deepest conviction – that even the seemingly unconquerable intelligence of critical men can be undermined by a moment of ideological complacency.

George Fewkooombey, a wounded English soldier of the Boer War, embodies the lower-class ambivalence against which Brecht writes. Uneducated, with only the first volume of an encyclopedia to broaden his understanding of the world, the soldier's internal psychology draws the reader's attention because of its explicit absence from his most significant life decisions. Unlike many of the other characters in the novel, Fewkooombey's only "ideological" moments occur when he is perpetuating Peachum's manipulative philosophy onto his fellow working-class sufferers. The novel's conclusion, a fanciful representation of Fewkooombey's subconscious ambitions – in which he sits as orchestrator of the Final Judgment Day, interrogates witnesses about the wrongs committed against the poor, and ultimately concludes that it is the poor's blind submission to the rich that condemns them to a life of destitution – reveals not only his loyalty to

the classist ideology which others impose upon him, but also his own hopelessness to fight subjugation under such a mentality.

After meeting with financial ruin from his first attempt at business ownership, the soldier forgoes his dignity in order to earn money from the charity of strangers – an option which, in his mind, represents shame and desperation. However, Peachum’s thriving beggar business requires that Fewkoombey alter his preexisting opinions. Initiated into Peachum’s labor collective by a violent street bum, Fewkoombey quickly learns “in the language of his kind that this new profession was just as well organized as any other, perhaps even better; and that he, the soldier, was not in a wild, uncivilized corner of the globe but in a great city, the hub of the world” (Brecht 11). Peachum, aware of the power he can gain through the loyalty of London’s vast population of unemployed workers, transforms the activities of the homeless into an enterprise of intelligence and manipulation. With the “language of [their] kind,” Peachum can construct an ideological apparatus to insure the subjugation of London’s impoverished population. He criticizes Fewkoombey’s previous actions as detrimental to the business’s success and, due to his position of power, successfully indoctrinates the soldier with a new ideology which serves Peachum’s own financial gain: “*When you stand about, making no effort to hide your stump, you’re saying to everyone: Look at what a terrible thing war is; it takes off a man’s leg! You should be ashamed of yourself. Wars are as necessary as they are terrible. Do you want everything taken away from us?...In short, you ought not to hawk your misery around. You haven’t the talent for that*” (Brecht 16). By framing Fewkoombey’s prior actions as treasonous to England, Peachum insures the loyalty of his newest employee. Ashamed of the potential harm he has done to his country from his previous “untalented” actions, the soldier happily enters into the

extortionate service of Peachum, in a maintenance job far more demeaning than that of a beggar on the street.

Moreover, as Peachum's family suffers from the threat of financial ruin, the businessman's tactics to preserve his wealth become ever more extreme, and yet the narration emphasizes Fewkoombey's complete lack of critical analysis. Polly, wracked with guilt over her premarital pregnancy and frightened of the abortion which she has scheduled, confesses her plight to Fewkoombey. Though the soldier knows that Peachum plans to save his company by arranging a marriage between Polly and his business partner, Fewkoombey does not recognize the twofold injustice of the situation – as Polly endangers her health while unknowingly losing her adolescent freedom. The narrator describes, in ideological discourse, the reaction which Fewkoombey *ought* to have, and yet acknowledges in the introduction to the passage that Fewkoombey is not capable of such thoughts:

Had he been thinking, his thoughts would have been somewhat as follows:

'Would there ever have been such a monstrous number of human beings to tear each other to bits for the sake of a few breaths of air, a few mouthfuls of ill-tasting food, and a leaking roof, if every time the £15 had been there to stop them being born?...Of course blood is thicker than water and every mother thinks her own child too good for this world. Her child must be made the exception! It's a good thing abortion costs money....' (Brecht 73)

In this way, the narrator draws attention to the plight of the poor in London, the true desperation which grips the lowest population of the city. Although this expression of frustration should occur naturally to the soldier, who himself lives as a product of social injustice, he does not attempt to think critically about his circumstances. The narrator continues: "That was what the

soldier would have thought if he *had* been thinking. But he did not think; he was trained to discipline” (Brecht 73). Fewkoombey, therefore, is not oblivious to Polly’s exploitation by her father or her plight as a young, unwed girl; rather, he fulfills his duty as a low-class worker and applies the requisite discipline of his occupation to his private thoughts as well. He has been taught, through the leadership of powerful men, that his thoughts must be restrained.

In fact, Fewkoombey’s only active contemplation of ideology surfaces in his conversation with Mary Sawyer, a bargain shop owner just days away from committing the suicide for which the soldier will be wrongfully charged. Guided by the mentality transferred to him by Peachum, Fewkoombey has internalized his duty to be useful and will, shortly after this conversation, agree to murder Coax in order to save his own life and preserve his boss’s business endeavors from financial ruin. As Mary expresses her lack of opportunity to advance her own business interests, Fewkoombey repeats, almost exactly, the words which Peachum spoke to him on his first day of employment: *“But you don’t belong to [the group of people with talent] – and neither do I. People like you and I go selling salt water on the sea-shore. We have no talents, even fewer than a hen has teeth...If one has no talent, one must do something else. Then it’s a case of: Make yourself twice and three times as useful as anyone else!”* (Brecht 205). Although Fewkoombey’s italicized speech indicates an ideological moment in the novel, his words confirm his uneducated perspective by their lack of critical interpretation. As a talentless individual, the soldier has been subjugated by the upper class into believing that he has earned the injustices that he endures. Thus, Fewkoombey demonstrates the reproduction of ideology, the cyclical reinforcement of power through an ideological state apparatus – in this case, the hierarchy between the working and business classes.

In contrast to Fewkoombey's unintelligent silence, Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum utilizes ideology, though only to idealize his innocence and rationalize the failure of his businesses and other personal endeavors. Throughout the novel, Peachum changes his attitude with the shifting prospects of his business, and he relies upon the extortion of others to accomplish his financial goals. His lack of agency and the inconsistent logic behind his actions – both manifested in his interactions with Polly and the Marine Transport Company – condemn Peachum to a marginalized leadership role in the world of business, subservient to leaders who present a coherent, dependable representation of their ideology. Moreover, his interpretations of events in the novel do not coincide with the reality that readers see, and these inconsistencies demonstrate a misuse of ideology as a means of subjugation.

In the first place, Peachum attempts to achieve fame through critical means by founding the extortionist Marine Transport Company, and although he perpetuates an ideology of innocence to absolve him of responsibility, his carelessness insures the business's failure. In order to promote a business founded upon the model of government deception, the MTC leaders, Coax and Peachum, must convince its capital investors of the business's incorruptibility and the certainty of its profits. In other words, knowing that the business rests upon fraudulent transactions, the company's founding members must deceive their fellow investors as well as their future consumers. Nevertheless, as Peachum forges the contract for the MTC among his unwittingly complicit businessmen, the narrator offers a commentary on his leadership qualifications: "There are some people who have the capacity for remaining entirely uninfluenced by the feelings of others, who can remain completely immune from actualities and can speak their thoughts, openly and freely, without regard for time and place. Such men are born to be leaders" (Brecht 42). In the context of the business deal, however, this apparent praise

of Peachum's leadership is tinged with irony. Despite vocal objections from the rest of his team about the conditions of the soon-to-be-purchased war ships, Peachum "remains entirely uninfluenced" and pursues the sale. This contract, in turn, has devastating outcomes – two bankruptcies, one suicide, one murder, and the tragic death of a ship-full of British soldiers and crew – all as a result of Peachum's disregard for his surrounding influences. The narrator's remarks, though superficially laudatory, reveal the true shortcomings of Peachum's leadership potential later in the novel.

Additionally, Peachum's "immun[ity] from actualities" thwarts his attempts to correct the damage of his MTC contractual obligations by utilizing his daughter's romantic appeal. The narrator echoes Peachum's internal monologue as he recognizes the implications of Polly's sudden marriage to MacHeath:

Through her boundless sensuality, doubtless inherited from her mother, and as a result of culpable inexperience, Polly had thrown herself into the arms of a more than sinister individual. Why she had immediately married her lover was a mystery to him. He suspected something terrible. But his view about keeping the necessary distance between relations would not allow him to speak to her about her private affairs. Besides... outspokenness only brought these things into the realm of possibility and one lost thereby one's chief weapon, the patent inability to conceive that anything wrong could have happened. (Brecht 111)

Not only does he discount Polly's sexuality as a component of her youth (rather than as her own strategy for financial security), but he also exposes the weakness of his "born leadership." In order to "[remain] entirely uninfluenced by the feelings" of his daughter, he avoids discussing the problems of her behavior altogether. Much like the case of the Marine Transport Company,

by silencing the voice of opposition – or never allowing it to surface in the first place – Peachum can ignore the possibility that “anything wrong could have happened” and continue to exploit his fellow citizens without a guilty conscience.

Moreover, as Peachum’s circumstances become increasingly desperate, he casts himself as a victim of others’ incompetence, rather than acknowledging his own lack of foresight in making business decisions. In an effort to ingratiate himself to Coax and save his fortune, Peachum has promised his daughter’s hand in marriage, not realizing that she has already wed another man. Although the crisis originates from his unwise judgment, Peachum condemns his daughter for his misfortune. Claiming that all his actions have revolved around his search for a respectable husband for Polly, Peachum spouts his ideological convictions: “...*for her sake I entered into a business of which I understood nothing, simply in order to get a dowry for her!...Now I shall have to consider how I can get a divorce for her. And even then she has ruined her life. Coax will never forgive her; he has strong views on purity in women and, as things stand, he has a right to be particular!*” (Brecht 103). The reader knows this to be a contradiction with the novel’s earlier events, and the italicized speech reinforces this conclusion. Unable to accept that his lack of agency contributes to his business failure, Peachum invests his ideology with the mentality of moral superiority and blamelessness, choosing instead to assign blame to those “below him” who have not served his interests adequately. Although Peachum has witnessed Coax’s pornographic obsession, and knows of the man’s frequent evenings with prostitutes, he ignores these flaws in order to protect his innocence and prevent the failure of the MTC. In this way, Peachum fails to rise through the ranks of business, not because of lack of education, but rather due to impotence in the face of opposition. His ideology conforms to the

situation at hand, as he works tirelessly to free himself from blame, regardless of the people with whom he must associate in the process.

In contrast to the other characters of the novel, MacHeath truly understands the process of ideological indoctrination, and he utilizes this knowledge to exploit others while maintaining his appearance as an altruistic leader. From his early experience as a gang leader, to his rise to power as a mogul of the bargain shop industry, MacHeath uses competitive human nature to his advantage and recognizes the importance of the weak in safeguarding the success of the strong. With unexpected obstacles to his business success, too, MacHeath exercises his critical intelligence in order to remain at the top of the social strata. Nevertheless, Brecht does not allow his novel to conclude with the unbridled success of a manipulative leader of the masses. He completes his alienation of readers by introducing Polly's influence into MacHeath's business world, proving that even great leaders can be deceived by their perceptions of a person's weakness.

Although MacHeath conceals his notorious identity under the aliases of "MacHeath" and "Beckett," the narrator describes the mogul's past as a serial killer known as "The Knife," acknowledging his widespread reputation while also calling attention to his unorthodox approach to crime. As the organizer for a savage and widespread network of murderers, MacHeath earns his reputation for depravity by receiving credit for other men's crimes, and not by perpetrating them himself. In fact, this early evidence of MacHeath's leadership style manifests itself more impressively in his organization of the B. shops. Whereas Peachum strengthens his "labor union" with repression and the use of force, MacHeath equips his affiliates with supplies and rental space for their shops, ostensibly to prepare them for business success equal to his own. This strategy combines MacHeath's overarching ideology of strong-weak relationships with his

understanding of “*the atavistic urge of human nature*” (Brecht 51). This characteristic of all men, according to MacHeath, prompts individuals to compete in order to survive and, if exploited correctly, can result in great profits for the organizer of the populace. He elaborates on this business strategy,

It is the masses that count. The business man who ignores the penny, the hard-earned penny of the worker, makes a great mistake...The healthy, thinking business man is not afraid of fighting. Only the weakling is afraid, and over him the wheel of destiny will pass to crush and to destroy. Aaron's have joined us, not because our blue eyes attract them, but because they must; because they respect the tough, enduring and self-sacrificing work of the B. shops. And these qualities must still be further strengthened. Our power depends upon our industry and our contentedness. (Brecht 162)

MacHeath achieves his commercial success not because his store owners are actually content, but because their unceasing efforts to attain financial stability propel his own business forward. Each man, regardless of his socio-economic status, earns the title of businessman and works tirelessly to achieve the economic success which they automatically associate with such an occupation. Thus MacHeath's industry depends upon the industry of others. By couching workers' servitude in the terms of the business world, however, MacHeath indoctrinates his business philosophy in his employees without inciting their resistance or discontent.

Moreover, in contrast to Peachum's philosophical contradictions, MacHeath recognizes, through his critical understanding of human nature, the importance of remaining consistent in his business scheme, even when he finds such actions disagreeable. Having assimilated into the professional world of commerce, MacHeath can no longer command his employees with the

same methods of his gang-leader years. He complains of his new role, while recognizing its importance to his overall success:

What a way of doing business – smoking cigarettes and signing agreements! So I've got to smuggle in little sentences and drop suggestive hints! Why can't I say straight off: your money or your life!...[An employer] must first stick cigars into his managers' filthy mouths and then drum into their heads what they are to say to the almighty employees so that they may graciously be pleased to work to the greater glory and profit of their master. (Brecht 363-64)

Through MacHeath's analysis of commercial success, Brecht portrays the process by which ideology succeeds. MacHeath operates under the mentality of *not* alienating his employees, and by doing so he effectively institutes his business schemes. Readers, by recognizing MacHeath's calculated approach to his ultimate business plan, also observe the surreptitious influence that ideology can have on a broad group of individuals.

In spite of his seemingly invincible leadership of London commerce, MacHeath, too, becomes the product of exploitation. Polly Peachum, a renowned "mass of sensuality" within the city (Brecht 25), deceives her husband with her apparent ignorance and naïveté while surpassing his success with her own ascent through the ranks of London's socio-economic strata. Although her guiding "ideology" rests in her personal navigation of sexual awakening, her independence in both the pursuit of sexual fulfillment and the preservation of her reputation distinguish her from the working-class characters of the novel. Sharing MacHeath's business logic, Polly adapts her own ideology to changes within her social circle.

Recognizing her physical appeal to the male sex, Polly struggles with the conflict between the ideology which she has received through her moral upbringing and the passion

revealed within the novels that she reads: “‘*Oh!*’ she sighed, *how dreadful is this scene with Elvira – the pure, beautiful girl fighting against her sinful thoughts...I dare not even mention my dreams – [for] I fear that my fleshy desires will drag me down to the gutter where, as I have been told, so many wretches end*” (Brecht 29). An alienated reader, Polly can no longer ignore the urges for sexual encounters that she feels. Moreover, the behavior of both of her parents contradicts their purported concerns for her sexual purity. While Peachum exploits his daughter’s beauty in order to mollify investors and other business associates of his beggars’ union, Mrs. Peachum similarly encourages Polly to flaunt her appearance in order to gain a suitable husband. With these conflicting moral standards, Polly succumbs to her sexual desire for Mr. Smiles and becomes pregnant with his child. However, rather than resign herself to a poor reputation for loose morals, she exploits MacHeath’s attraction to her, and arranges a quick marriage for the two of them, supposedly out of an uncontrolled desire to be intimate with him. The contradictions of Polly’s parents undermine the moralistic ideology that they spread to her, and, once alienated from these ideas, she alters her approach to beauty in order to exploit those around her and maintain her new way of life.

Although MacHeath suspects that Polly has not remained entirely pure throughout her adolescence, he allows his preconceived notion of female weakness to cloud his critical perspective. Convinced that his wife’s pregnancy is the result of their own sexual encounters, MacHeath disregards his doubts of Polly’s fidelity and entrusts his business to her while imprisoned. He voices the potential consequences of Polly’s independence to his business partner, Grooch: “*[Polly] is still pregnant by me and therefore cannot simply yield to her inclination and run away on any little trivial pretext. Only the most desperate reasons would drive a woman in that condition to such extremes. That’s the advantage of being pregnant.*”

That's when they realize where their duty lies" (Brecht 293). Though Polly is, in fact, bound to MacHeath in order to solidify her reputation as a loyal wife, MacHeath remains unsuspecting of her ulterior motives and assumes that she views such fidelity as a "duty." He views Polly as another consumer and thus assumes that she will conform to the ideology of servitude for his personal gain.

In actuality, Polly recognizes the security of MacHeath's loyalty through his excitement to be a father, and she uses his conception of masculine "duty" as affirmation that she can continue her adulterous life without the fear of repercussions. In this way, the superficial strong-weak relationship between them – which MacHeath assumes to fall in his favor – is reversed, as Polly's own ideological convictions demonstrate: "*I'm not a good wife,*" she thought. *'He works for me and I do nothing. Even though it is only superficial and has nothing to do with my deeper feelings when I now and again sleep with men...'*" (Brecht 237). For the first and only time of the novel, MacHeath serves another individual, as Polly indicates that he "works" for her as a loyal husband. MacHeath, in relying on his wife's uncritical, loyal attitude towards him, neglects to adjust his behavior to fit with her distinct ideological stance. For this reason, he fails to maintain control over her actions, and he falls victim to the deception of a resistant ideological power structure.

In conclusion, through the relationships of these four characters with the world of the novel and each other, Brecht identifies the process by which ideology becomes engrained within a submissive populace, as well as a successful implementation of the alienation effect that he promotes. The ideological sections of the novel alienate readers, and draw their attention to the role of these instances in perpetuating or overturning the dominant ideology of the individuals involved. Through MacHeath's rise to power, Brecht parallels the path of success for German

National Socialism in his home country. MacHeath's growing commercial empire – his personal ideological apparatus - reinforces the subjugation of the less-powerful classes with the language of healthy competition, deceiving them of their inability to ameliorate their destitution. However, Brecht also demonstrates the power of his alienation effect by illustrating Polly's power to change her circumstances by altering the typical male-female relationships under which most individuals of the novel operate. Therefore, *Threepenny Novel* functions as a microcosm of ideological subjugation – its promotion, consolidation, and eventual subversion at the hands of the critical populace.

Through this new narrative form, Brecht could finally accomplish in literature what had eluded him in theatre; he applied a scientific, ideological analysis to a fictional world and discovered a physical means to alienate the audience to whom he wrote. When he returned to play writing after the novel's publication, Brecht entered a new phase of his career and composed the works which are considered by critics today to be his masterpieces. By exploring his estrangement technique in the world of the novel, Brecht had finally discovered the necessary balance between political and apolitical critique; he had communicated his own ideology through the lens of relatable characters in a fictional social setting. He had finally cultivated the means of appealing to the collective, while alienating them from their collective consciousness. In short, the novel, by virtue of its experimental nature, solidified the theoretical notions for which Brecht would ultimately become famous.

Every generation is met with certain conditions that already exist in their present form as that generation comes into the world. Great people are worth something only insofar as they are able to understand correctly these conditions and what is necessary to alter them.

- Joseph Stalin, *interview with Emil Ludwig, 1931*

III. Bulgakov's Rebellion against Stalinist Repression in *The Master and Margarita*

Mikhail Bulgakov, like Brecht, wrote prolifically during a time of social repression and artistic censorship. When Joseph Stalin took power over Russia in 1924, his totalitarian policies caused a reduction in standard of living, a repression of basic human rights, and a widespread nationalization of creative and scholarly writing. For this reason, Brecht's alienation effect remained salient for Russian intellectuals as Ideological State Apparatuses exercised a growing influence over the Russian populace as well as prominent Russian authors. However, despite the fact that many authors conformed to the Stalin's socialist agenda, others continued to produce dissident, revolutionary material. These intellectuals, with a widespread readership and a reputation for avant-garde vision, possessed the power to either reinforce or undermine Stalin's control over the subjugated Russian masses. Bulgakov writes his *Master and Margarita* with this authorial power in mind, creating a novel about the act and significance of writing a novel. His interwoven story lines form a chaotic mix of narrative voices, while his consistent parallelism reminds readers of the novel's ultimate message. By contrasting the irrationality of Moscow's population with the enlightened readers and writers of the novel, Bulgakov emphasizes the importance of critical thinking and intellectual discussion. In light of the political repression of Soviet Russia, Bulgakov does not promote a particular political agenda, but rather insists that his readers avoid the ideological subjugation born of intellectual complacency.

The Russian *intelligentsia* emerged in the early nineteenth century as an informal group of scholars dedicated to preserving the essence of Russia's culture and promulgating it to the masses of the country. Though their notoriety increased throughout the century, their newfound style of Russian Symbolism revealed the explicit political aims of the organization for the first time in the late 1800s. This moment in Russian literary history, an extension of the experimental modernism sweeping through literature across the world, represented the cultivation of not only a new method of description and narration, but also the recognition of literature's rhetorical power. In his book *Stalin and the Literary Intelligentsia, 1928-39*, A. Kemp-Welch discusses the implications of the movement on literature's use as a political entity: "Russian writers of the last two decades before the First World War entered a phase of feverish experiment, sometimes referred to as a Silver Age. This moment [known as Russian Symbolism], of which the principle medium was poetry, attempted to educate the public in 'symbolic' language which emphasized the musical and mystical at all costs, including some critics thought, lucidity" (Kemp-Welch 4). The emphasis of Kemp-Welch's analysis is, of course, the role of literature in the *education* of others. The literary intelligentsia defined its purpose as one of bringing culture to the barely literate population of Russia and, consequently, advancing respect for this experimental art throughout the country. Since this group held such control over the definition of "culture" to the Russian people, it was imperative that the Russian government monitor them closely.

When Vladimir Lenin took power after the October Revolution in 1917, he recognized this power of literature and, in order to facilitate the triumph of Marxist ideology in Russia's readership, allowed the authors to persist within the unique position of their social class. As he implemented the New Economic Policy, Lenin realized the degree to which his newly conquered population fell short of the Marxist ideal. Far from the motivated, revolutionary working class

that Marx had envisioned as a catalyst for communism, Lenin “inherited a ruined, largely peasant country,” a proletariat without the radical aspirations requisite to solidifying Lenin’s power (Kemp-Welch 21). Kemp-Welch describes Lenin’s subsequent approach to political stability: “And Lenin quickly saw that in the absence of an advanced working class, a policy of immediate compromise with ideologically unreliable elements – the peasantry, small traders, and intelligentsia groupings – was the indispensable order of the day” (Kemp-Welch 21). Lenin recognized the ideological nature of literature, and as a result created a state-sanctioned branch of it, an overt Ideological State Apparatus to improve working-class morale and increase his political favor. Having granted the literary intelligentsia creative freedom, Lenin also anticipated that pro- Marxist literature would be a direct result of such generosity, a product of the gratitude that these writers undoubtedly felt towards him for preserving their occupations as the bearers of Russian culture.

However, following Lenin’s death, Joseph Stalin envisioned a far greater loyalty to socialist ideals than the Russian populace demonstrated, and he set out to engender such loyalty through a regimented system of political literature, without the creative freedom which authors had experienced under the previous regime. Recognizing the impact that contemporary literature would have on the formation of history, Stalin identified and exiled authors whose writing did not coincide with his ideology. Citing an encyclopedia entry written during Stalin’s political transition, Kemp-Welch identifies the method by which Stalin eradicated dissidents from the public sphere: “The author of an encyclopedia entry in 1931 alleged that ‘*kulak* literature’ provided an idealistic picture of old Russia, juxtaposing its traditions, hierarchical establishment and ‘soul’ with the ‘soulless’ USSR. He deplored in it an anti-urbanism, seeing the towns as the source of all evil, threatening the purity of the countryside” (Kemp-Welch 104). Stalin’s

repression quickly spread from the literary intelligentsia to the Russian population as a whole, reflecting his desire for unmitigated power and his understanding of the role of literature in accomplishing that goal. However, after the grave crimes committed by Stalin's army during collectivization, political favor for the dictator fell to an all-time low. The removal of dissident literary propaganda, rather than eliminating popular discontent toward Stalin's policies, heightened the Russian masses' sense of injustice, the consciousness that their dictator had silenced a significant proportion of previously valued opinions within the country.

For this reason, in 1932, Stalin reversed his position towards the old intelligentsia, choosing instead to advance his popularity through a new Union of Soviet Writers, an organization of the literary intelligentsia regulated by the distribution of economic incentives to authors who cooperated with Stalin's political objectives. Although participation in this new Union was voluntary, authors could hardly resist the promise of financial security after living for years in a ruined economy, under a regime of cruelty and repression. By offering career opportunities and protection by his military as incentives, Stalin orchestrated a collection of well-known authors who willingly wrote in support of his political campaigns and, consequently, advanced his political ideology throughout the country with a new ideal genre known as socialist realism. Kevin Platt and David Brandenberger describe this new literary style in terms of its usefulness to Stalin's broad political aspirations. Unlike the complex literature produced by the Symbolists prior to the October Revolution, socialist realist stories involved popular heroes and straightforward plot schemes that even recently-educated readers could understand. Platt and Brandenberger continue: "These populist, heroic tales were to provide a common narrative – a story of identity – that the entire society could relate to. Reflecting a new emphasis on patriotism and russo-centrism in the press after the mid-1930s, these heroes were to be a rallying call with

greater mass appeal than the preceding decade's narrow and impersonal materialist focus on social forces and class struggle" (Platt 9). Stalin recognized the need to mobilize the working class around an ideologically charged literary tradition, and he succeeded in this objective through the Union of Soviet Writers and socialist realism. By exploiting the country's well-defined and respected literary intelligentsia, Stalin streamlined the voice of nationalist Russian literature, eliminated discordant opinions from public discourse, and thus made his repression increasingly possible.

Following his refusal to join the Union of Soviet Writers and the resulting censorship of his works by the Russian government, Mikhail Bulgakov wrote *The Master and Margarita*, a complex satire designed to expose the extent to which Stalin's unmitigated power had penetrated the literary sphere of Russian society. However, the alienation of his audience in this case would prove to be a difficult challenge, as the dominant socialist realist style had reinforced the propagandist claims of the Soviet regime. A successful satire would seek to overturn the state-promulgated narratives of Russian history, Russian literature and, above all, Russian well-being since the regime's onset in the 1920s. Bulgakov dispels each of these ideological underpinnings of Stalin's regime, however, through the unorthodox narrative strategy of the novel - a two-fold strategy including a *mise en abyme* structure and the chaos of language in the novel known as *heteroglossia*. A term originally created to describe the mimetic concept of endless concentric images, the *mise en abyme* describes any repeated concept or image within a work of art – in the case of Bulgakov's novel, another novel created by one of its characters. In his book *The Author as Hero*, Justin Weir explains the inherent alienation of the reader caused by a *mise en abyme* structure: "A *mise en abyme* is a representation of the entire novel within a single image or passage in the novel. By describing how the *mise en abyme*, itself a work of art, is created, the

novel seems to narrate its own birth. And this narrative description of the birth of art allows us to begin to describe each novel's preconception of what authorship itself meant to each novelist" (Weir ix). Bulgakov successfully employs this technique in *The Master and Margarita* through the interpolation, and eventual merging, of the master's own story about Pontius Pilate at the crucifixion of Jesus with the novel as a whole, a supernatural tale of Satan's destructive visit to Moscow. While this parallel structure alienates the reader by emphasizing the novel's meta-literary focus, it also provides unity in an otherwise discordant mixture of narrative voices.

Russian scholar Mikhail Bakhtin first coined the term *heteroglossia* precisely to describe the narrative effect of uniting a panoply of voices within a work of art, an effect that carries an intrinsically political connotation. In her book *Literary Exorcisms of Stalinism*, Margaret Ziolkowski describes Bakhtin's analysis of *heteroglossia* in literature as a whole, and applies these conclusions to post-Stalinist era literature specifically: "Heteroglossia is a way of describing social and cultural diversity as it is expressed through language...Bakhtin suggests that as the heteroglot, or multifarious, background to the novel is transformed, at times more rapidly than others, a process of reaccentuation of images and language in the novel occurs" (Ziolkowski 7-8). Whereas Stalin collapsed the voices of the literary intelligentsia into a universal socialist realist style, Bulgakov incorporates decades of stylistic traditions and literary history into his novel for an entirely different purpose. By incorporating three narratives with distinct stylistic qualities into his novel, he creates a cacophony of language which destabilizes the reader and emphasizes the diversity of obscured voices which existed at the height of Soviet Russia. Whereas *heteroglossia* destabilizes the reader's distinction between "reality" and "fiction" in the novel, the *mise-en-abyme* unites each story under the themes of writing and intellectual discussion.

This analysis, therefore, will explore each stage of the *mise en abyme* in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. Beginning with the master's Pilate story, I will show that while, on one hand, the story recalls early symbolist traditions of incorporating Roman heroes into their novels, it also incorporates the socialist realism of the subsequent Stalinist period. Furthermore, as each segment of the Pilate story originates from a different narrator, I will argue that these narrative lenses introduce the theme of critical interpretation, while also granting the novel's readers insight into the motivations of each of the Moscow story's primary characters. Having developed this point, I will analyze the parallelism between the Pilate and Moscow stories, especially in connection with each Pilate episode's specific narrator. Finally, I will conclude my analysis with a discussion of the epilogue's narrator, who offers his perspective on the impact of socialism on the rationality and well-being of the Moscow public. In this way, I will show how Bulgakov not only identifies the extent of Stalin's oppression, but also encourages his readers to develop their own critical stance towards the inherent subjugation of a dictatorial regime.

By introducing a contradictory representation of the life of Jesus Christ, the novel's Pilate story embodies the literary traditions of Russia's intelligentsia and frames a broad critique of any literature that claims to represent the truth. In her book, *Russia's Rome: Imperial Visions, Messianic Dreams, 1890-1940*, Judith Kalb explains the tradition of the Roman empire within Russian literature, especially in the context of growing modernist experimentation:

The dominant Russia-Rome paradigm created at the turn of the twentieth century would endure to a large degree through the revolution and the consolidation of Soviet rule, though roles would shift along with power and allegiances... While early modernist Rome texts link the intelligentsia with revolutionaries in opposition to the state, later texts, such as those of Kuzmin and Bulgakov, link the

Bolsheviks with the Roman Empire in opposition to a narrative of artistic revelation and faith. (Kalb 26)

As an example of a vastly-powerful state with great economic prosperity, Rome had long represented the political aspirations of the Russian state, and as revolutionary attitudes grew with the Symbolist movement, it is unsurprising that such images of unconquerable power coincided with the politics of the era. Authors and readers of this period saw immense potential in Marxist ideology, with its promises to empower the proletariat and solidify political dominance of the communist state. However, as Stalin's control over the literary intelligentsia intensified through the mid-twentieth century, these early dreams of political power could now be linked to the rampant socialism of the Soviet government. That is to say, the shift which Kalb describes does not indicate a change in Russia's desire to emulate the power of the Roman Empire, but rather a shift in authors' critical perceptions of this power and its effects on their readership.

For this reason, the setting of the master's story in ancient Jerusalem takes on great significance for the novel as a whole – both because Jerusalem (or, in the novel, “Yershalaim”) subsisted under the control of the Romans during the time of Christ, and also because the story's main character, Pontius Pilate, operates as a branch of the Roman Empire while also preserving a critical eye towards the decisions that he makes. Ziolkowski identifies this duality of responsibility within Pilate's character as a key point to understanding Bulgakov's philosophy toward literary interpretation: “Pilate was never a prominent figure in the Stalinist rhetorical arsenal. Yet at the same time, the notorious Roman is in a sense an obvious candidate for inclusion in post-Stalinist portrayals of Stalinism because evaluation of his existential stance can easily be accommodated to the dualistic vision of reality so characteristic of literary assessments critical of the Stalin era” (Ziolkowski 70). Referring to Pilate as “the quintessential relativist,”

Ziolkowski indicates that his relative absence from the overtly political novels of socialist realism and his ambiguous consent to the death of Jesus Christ in the gospels make him the perfect agent for the critical thinking that authors sought in their analysis of Stalin's reign. Thus, regardless of the story's content or narrator in the context of the larger novel, the Pilate story represents the merging of Russian Symbolism (through a typical Rome-based plot), with the realist style of Stalin's socialist politics (manifest in the banality of narration, in contrast to the larger novel's supernatural setting) – all incorporated with post-Stalinist era literary critique, through the designation of Pilate as the story's hero. As a microcosm of these historical and contemporary literary influences, therefore, the composition of the Pilate story, in terms of its content as well as the *process* by which the master composes it, offers the reader his first glimpse into Bulgakov's conception of the political role of literature.

The first portion of the Pilate story, introduced by Woland as he lectures Massolit members Berlioz and Ivan Nikolaevich, emphasizes the potential for the truth to be misrepresented in literature. As Pilate interrogates Yeshua (an archaic spelling of "Jesus"), the fault for the prisoner's conviction lies not only with Judas of Kiriath, but also with his disciple, Matthew Levi, who spread the rumors that cast suspicion on Yeshua in the first place. Although Judas's betrayal accords with the story told in the gospels, Matthew Levi's inconsistency as a writer represents a contradictory truth claim to the Biblical account. In contrast to the Biblical stories with which Bulgakov's readers would be familiar, Yeshua testifies in the Pilate story that each of these reports represents an exaggeration by his disciple. Defending himself to Pilate, Yeshua refers to Matthew's lack of credibility: "...there's one with a goatskin parchment who follows me, follows me and keeps writing all the time. But once I peeked into this parchment and was horrified. I said decidedly nothing of what's written there" (Bulgakov 23). Matthew's

misrepresentation of his leader's intentions recalls the same fear that Stalin harbored toward the Russian writers' creative freedom and the effect that their works would have on his reputation. Although Christ hoped to spread the truth of his religion with Yershalaim's, Matthew's misinterpretation has created a "confusion that may go on for a very long time," that is, an understanding of truth embedded in the false authority of an experienced author in Jewish culture.

Furthermore, as Yeshua testifies to his misrepresentation, the court's secretary, an individual charged with recording the events of the day exactly as they occur, cannot complete his task from disbelief. Mesmerized by the new "truth" as told by Yeshua, the secretary forgets his objective as an agent of the court and listens intently, "trying not to let drop a single word" (Bulgakov 25). For this reason, though the secretary has been exposed to the contradiction between the public condemnation of Yeshua and the truth of his innocence, he cannot disseminate his new interpretation of the week's events because he has not recorded Yeshua's words. Moreover, as the story enters the interiority of the secretary, the reader understands that his sense of "belief" does not encompass the content of Yeshua's message, but merely rests on his acceptance that a contradictory view of the truth can even exist: "The secretary now thought of only one thing, whether to believe his ears or not. He had to believe. Then he tried to imagine precisely what whimsical form the wrath of the hot-tempered procurator would take at this unheard-of impudence from the prisoner. And this the secretary was unable to imagine, though he knew the procurator well" (Bulgakov 25). Just as Matthew Levi echoes the possibility of falsity in literature, the secretary reflects the willingness of the populace to succumb to an interpretation espoused by the dominant literary canon. Once indoctrinated with one version of "truth," a readership cannot shift its view without first being alienated from the language of

ideological reinforcement. The secretary cannot imagine another truth, and simply anticipates the punishment awaiting Yeshua for his insistence upon an alternative interpretation of reality.

As Yeshua continues his testimony, however, he overturns Pilate's preconceptions of his guilt in a successful example of indoctrination. Emphasizing Pilate's own "intelligence" and capacity to entertain new philosophies, Yeshua challenges the procurator to engage in a dialogue with him. Although Pilate cannot reject his duty as an agent of Roman law, he nevertheless continues to ponder the merits of Yeshua's unorthodox claims: "...it seemed vaguely to the procurator that there was something he had not finished saying to the condemned man, and perhaps something he had not finished hearing" (Bulgakov 35). Although Yeshua's prior fears of misrepresentation reflect the same fears of Stalin in his early years of control over Russia, this emphasis on intellectual dialogue embodies the ideals of the Russian intelligentsia, especially as their voices were increasingly silenced under a nationalized literary voice. Thus, as the first excerpt of the Pilate story reaches its conclusion, the readers cannot interpret the master's ultimate message.

In spite of this ambiguity, Pilate's preoccupation with Yeshua takes on greater significance because it is told through the perspective of Woland, a character often described by literary critics as a representation of Stalin himself. As the Pilate story concludes and the novel returns to the broader Moscow story, the first instance of the *mise en abyme* narration becomes apparent, through the parallelism between Yeshua and Woland, Berlioz and the secretary and, most importantly, Ivan "Homeless" Nikolaevich and Matthew Levi. The novel begins with a dialogue between Berlioz, a distinguished editor of Moscow's literary journal, and his fellow Massolit member Ivan, whose pseudonym distinguishes him as a "proletarian" writer (Pevear 397). From the novel's outset, these companions debate the existence of Jesus, with Berlioz

asserting that “the main thing was not how Jesus was, good or bad, but that this same Jesus, as a person, simply never existed in the world, and all the stories about him were mere fiction, the most ordinary mythology” (Bulgakov 9). In response to this, Woland interpolates an episode of fiction which claims to represent the truth and, in so doing, both confirms the purported “mythology” of the existing gospels while also contradicting the assumption that as “mythology” these stories negate the existence of Jesus altogether. Thus, the Moscow and Pilate stories call into question the same truth, but through a lens of fiction rather than historical fact. That the gospels are false remains a foregone conclusion; rather, the uncertainty lies with which writer and, by extension, which fiction, merits a designation as truth.

Most importantly, Woland’s narrative succeeds as an ideologically alienating work for his audience, not because of its content alone, but also its unnerving, mystical foundation. Upon hearing such inflammatory claims about the existence of Jesus, the intellectual convictions of Pilate, and the inaccuracy of the gospels, Berlioz and Ivan demand the stranger’s papers, as confirmation of his political loyalties and thus his qualifications as a bearer of truth. However, Woland responds by narrating the events of the coming evening, predicting the death of Berlioz himself and other supernatural occurrences which will plague the writers. As these mystical predictions come true, Ivan loses his certainty of reality and thus his rationality as a writer. Faced with reporting to the police the existence of a strange, seemingly omnipotent, undocumented foreigner in the Russian capital, Ivan soon becomes physically alienated from the community in which he lives. His loss of sanity prompts the police to institutionalize him, to label his unknown claims upon the truth not as rational thought, but rather as incoherent babble, unworthy of the attention of the Russian authorities. In this way, Woland succeeds in promulgating his new truth, while slowly disenfranchising any credible authors of literature who could discredit his claims.

Rather than waiting for his “truth” to dominate the masses of Moscow, Woland asserts control over the intelligentsia through language and renders the creative avenues of public opinion useless under his influence.

Ivan’s institutionalization establishes a dichotomy between the nationalized ideology of the Russian state and the voice of the independent writer, emphasizing the connection of literature and history under Stalin’s reign. Weir describes the accuracy of this connection in illustrating the horrors of Stalinist Russia and its effect on the novel’s readers:

Both readers and characters are hindered by a skepticism that results from this attack on rationality and from the deceptive participation of an ‘evil genius’ in the world of the novel. The loss of epistemological certainty produced by this skepticism parallels a loss of personal identity by the main characters in the novel, for both interpretation and self-interpretation proceed within the framework of ideologies that are repeatedly acknowledged as partial and impoverished.

Knowing and being are intimately related in the novel. (Weir 5-6)

Indeed, as soon as Ivan questions his grounding ideology, his personal identity falls under suspicion as well. Despite his certainty that he interacted with Woland in reality, rather than within a dream sequence, Ivan cannot convince others of the truth that he has witnessed. Trapped within a psychological clinic, Ivan resorts to complete silence, his voice ineffective among the agents of the state. Ivan’s subjugation to national authority becomes overtly apparent in his dealings with Dr. Stravinsky, who addresses Ivan in terms of the reality of his situation, rather than the credibility of his claim to the truth. He pacifies the writer, asserting that his fear originates not from the presence of some sinister fellow within Russia, but rather from the unsanctioned story of Pontius Pilate that disturbed him with its unanticipated historical claims.

As a resident of the medical clinic, Ivan has no choice but to accept the doctor's interpretation of the story and prognosis of his mental state, defined as an acute case of schizophrenia.

Nevertheless, Ivan's resignation to his diagnosis assumes a more critical stance as he adopts writing once again within the confines of the clinic. Although, in the chapter entitled "Schizophrenia, as was Said," Ivan mourns his diagnosis, the novel portends his new attitude with a more active description a few chapters later, in a segment entitled "Ivan Splits in Two." Just as these titles imply, Ivan moves from a passive acceptance of his new identity, to an active embrace of the possibilities of such irrationality. Resolved to communicate his experience to the proper authorities, Ivan sets out to record his statement of Woland's crimes; however, as the writing process frustrates Ivan, the reader infers that he cannot communicate the truth without a corroborating intellectual source. He wrestles with narrative structure, style, and word choice, only to quit in desperation as a storm descends upon Moscow:

By the time the frightening cloud with smoking edges appeared from far off and covered the woods, and the wind began to blow, Ivan felt that he was strengthless, that he would never be able to manage with the statement, and he would not pick up the scattered pages, and he wept quietly and bitterly... [The doctor] came, gave Ivan an injection in the arm, and assured him that he would not weep any more, that everything would pass now, everything would change, everything would be forgotten. (Bulgakov 116)

Once again, the reader observes the frustration of Ivan's solitary critical analysis, coupled with the promise of peace to those who accept the state's ideology. However, Bulgakov strategically stages Ivan's apparent psychotic break in the context of schizophrenia to develop further his conception of intellectual freedom. Following his medically induced sleep, Ivan ponders the

events of the preceding days between multiple personalities, split between “old Ivan” and “new Ivan” (Bulgakov 117). Though he reaches no conclusions from these internal musings, the split personalities of his interior monologue provide Ivan with peace, not through state-sanctioned methods, but through intellectual debate. With “old Ivan” as a believer in the supernatural, and “new Ivan” as a rational skeptic, Ivan himself can finally have peace because he has achieved an unresolved, but educated dialogue which enlightens his own sense of self.

Immediately following this critical revelation, Ivan becomes empowered by his isolation to finally tell his story, not to the state authorities, but to a “grateful listener,” a fellow clinic resident – the author of the Pilate story, the master himself. Completely detached from Woland’s invasion of Moscow, the master and Ivan form an underground community, a subversive intelligentsia to reenact the author-reader dialogue so necessary to their creative success. Unlike Ivan’s prior audiences, the master does not discredit his stories as the ravings of a madman, but instead relishes this supernatural account, becoming “ecstatic” at its conclusion by its transcendence of his daily surroundings. Moreover, having acknowledged the veracity of Ivan’s story, the master reciprocates with the account of the creation of his novel, paying no attention to the coincidence of the plots of his novel and the story which Ivan retells. The master’s story recreates the author-reader relationship by narrating the role of his secret lover, Margarita, as the inspiration to his creative process, and this relationship engenders another *mise en abyme* between the clandestine meetings of the master and his lover and the secretive meeting happening within the Ivan’s room at the medical clinic. Margarita’s violent devotion echoes the “ecstasy” that the master exhibits upon hearing Ivan’s claim to the truth, while the incredulity of the master’s editor mirrors the reaction of the medical personnel upon hearing Ivan’s testimony.

Thus, as the author-reader dynamic unfolds between these parallel scenes, Bulgakov's theory of political literature develops to include the role of language in facilitating an author's creative freedom. As he reminisces upon his days with Margarita, the master notes her enchantment with the language of his novel, and the reciprocal effect that this enchantment has on his desire to finish the masterpiece. The narration describes Margarita's critical feedback to the writing process, through the indirect discourse of the master: "She foretold fame, she urged him on, and it was then that she began to call him a master. She waited impatiently for the already promised last words about the fifth procurator of Judea, repeated aloud in a sing-song voice certain phrases she liked, and said that her life was in this novel" (Bulgakov 143). Praising the originality of the master's novel, and the language that he uses to communicate his message, Margarita provides a critical perspective for the master's writing and thus enables him to finish the narrative. And as she provides feedback, her perspective becomes engrained in the novel as well: "The man who called himself a master worked feverishly on his novel, and this novel also absorbed the unknown woman" (Bulgakov 142). A politics of literature develops within the small community formed by the master and his devoted reader. Recognizing her opinions and desires, the master incorporates them into his novel, into his story which will one day represent a claim on the truth. Just as Ivan inspires the master through his telling of reality through a language that the master recognizes, the master likewise inspires his reader with his interpretation of truth through a linguistic lens that she can understand.

Although Ivan remains deeply affected by this encounter, his agency as a writer has not yet been transformed, as reflected by his role in the narration of the ensuing episode of the Pilate story. Just as he and the master struggle for recognition as critical thinkers in a world of blind acceptance, so the portrayals of the story's prominent characters reflect these same shortcomings

– in the case of Matthew Levi, impotence from his misinterpretation of Yeshua’s teachings, and of Pilate, constraint through his role as an agent of the Roman Empire. Although the account of Matthew Levi forms the majority of this episode, the narration briefly addresses the restriction of critical thinking imposed upon Pilate by his official position. Anticipating public uproar against Yeshua’s wrongful conviction, the procurator deploys a double envoy of cavalymen to protect the integrity of the execution. Pilate knows that he has succumbed to the orders of his government rather than adhering to his personal beliefs and assumes that the public will be outraged by Yeshua’s fatal sentence. However, the procurator’s apprehensions prove false, as the public submits to the wishes of the Roman regime unquestioningly. The narration recognizes the ambivalence of the Jewish people: “No one attempted to rescue the condemned men either in Yershalaim itself, flooded with troops, or here on the cordoned-off hill, and the crowd went back to the city, for indeed there was nothing interesting in this execution” (Bulgakov 73). In this way, the dominant interpretation of truth, communicated to the Jewish people by Pilate’s ultimate decision, presents a satisfactory conclusion for them, while the procurator’s enduring apprehensions reflect his own guilt in ignoring his determination of Yeshua’s innocence.

At this moment in the story, however, the narration admits its own contradiction, presenting an alienating style of language which draws the reader’s attention to Matthew Levi’s plight. The narrator corrects his previous statement: “What has been said about there not being a single person beyond the file of legionaries is not quite true. There was one person, but he simply could not be seen by everyone. He had placed himself...on the north side, where the slope was not gentle and accessible” (Bulgakov 174). Thus, a lone disciple, inspired by Yeshua’s words, proceeds without recognition to honor the teacher’s memory and save him from perishing to the memory of the Jewish people. Though he remains determined to save Yeshua, each of his

attempts to do so proves ineffective or ill-timed, reinforcing his impotence in spreading the truth of the prisoner's teachings. As the episode concludes, Matthew Levi fails to preserve Yeshua to the degree that he desires, but he nevertheless flees with the truth, in the form of Yeshua's lifeless body. The memory of their interactions, though blighted by Matthew's incomplete interpretation of Yeshua's intent, preserves the truth, at the very least, within the disciple's mind. As the image of the storm recurs toward the scene's conclusion, the reader recalls the parallel structure of Matthew Levi's failed attempts at rescuing Yeshua and Ivan's inability to record the Pilate story. As Ivan observes a "frightening cloud with smoking edges," Matthew retreats with Yeshua in the wake of a "storm cloud suffused with black moisture and fire" (Bulgakov 181). Both Matthew and Ivan fall short of communicating the truth which they have experienced, and yet the memory of this truth sustains them throughout the iterations of literary creation. Once again, the *mise en abyme* enlightens Bulgakov's interpretation of a productive narrative process.

Following the conclusion of this second part of the Pilate story, and several episodes of continued mischief by Woland, Bulgakov fragments the narration with the introduction of an unknown narrator who has, ostensibly, organized the entire novel. Though he will continue to comment actively until the epilogue, this narrator unites the distinct parts of the novel precisely at this moment with a statement of authorial credibility. The novel's setting and characters have degenerated into irrationality, and yet the alienating language of this section reinvigorates the reader to find meaning in the purportedly "truthful narrative" that the speaker has created (Bulgakov 214). Repeated as the final lines of Part I, and again as the opening words of Part II, the command "Follow me, reader!" takes on heightened significance in the context of discipleship within the novel thus far (Bulgakov 214, 217). First evident in the parallels between Jesus and Stalin as eloquent leaders of a majority uncritical audience, the *mise en abyme* reaches

its full breadth by incorporating a final teacher-follower relationship between the novel as a whole and its contemporary readers. Having been unconsciously subjected to a seemingly omniscient narrator, the reader, like Ivan, suddenly loses his rational, critical eye as the novel continues with the unconnected introduction of Margarita. In this way, by the conclusion of the novel's first section, the alienation of *each* reader on *each* narrative level has been accomplished, though the "truth" of Bulgakov's authorial intent as yet remains unknown.

Just as Bulgakov's readers have been alienated by the abrupt shift in narrative voice, the *mise en abyme* component of the novel introduces Margarita as an alienated reader herself, one who bridges the Moscow and Pilate stores. To begin with, Margarita's relationship with her housekeeper, Natasha, reflects Margarita's capacity for critical thinking, as well as the role of this skill in separating her intellectually from the Muscovites en masse. After hearing rumors of Woland's mischief in the city, Natasha hurries to spread the frightening news to her supervisor. And yet, such hysterical claims fail to generate a strong reaction in Margarita because of her logical apprehension toward the supernatural. She rationalizes each event primarily through placing blame upon the stupidity of the Russian public rather than the influence of a mystical evil force. Thus distinguished by her sophisticated reason, Margarita reinforces her intellectual and socio-economic alienation from the common people of the capital city. Moreover, recognizing Margarita's advantageous social status, the narrator expresses incredulity at her personal dissatisfaction, echoing the cries of Pilate from his prior scene of internal conflict:

Margarita Nikolaevna was not in need of money. Margarita Nikolaevna could buy whatever she liked...Margarita Nikolaevna knew nothing of the horrors of life in a communal apartment. In short...she was happy? Not for one minute!..Gods, my gods! What, then, did this woman need?!..I do not know. I have no idea.

Obviously she was telling the truth, she needed him, the master, and not at all some Gothic mansion, not a private garden, not money. (Bulgakov 218)

Her alienation exists not only because of her material differences from the Russian public, but also because her psychological needs extend far beyond the treasures gained from financial riches alone. In fact, like the readers of the novel as a whole, Margarita has critically-consumed the master's narrative as truth, and this intellectual influence permanently widens the gap between her and the rest of Moscow society as portrayed in the novel. However, in the brief absence of her husband from the household, Margarita achieves the key to her "freedom" of "thinking what she liked or dreaming what she liked" (Bulgakov 220); that is, without the distraction of outside influences, Margarita can read the surviving excerpt of her master's work without interruption. Unlike any other reader in the novel, Margarita exists as an independent entity, a woman of intelligence whose only concept of truth lies within a partially destroyed work of fiction. Her willingness to forgo all societal comforts, to pledge her soul to Woland's service, and to complete the master's work at all costs represents a successful implementation of the alienation effect against Woland's politics of repression and fear in the rest of the Russian populace, while her fate reveals the inherent difficulties of achieving the idealized impact of such literary creativity.

In contrast to the fear tactics he uses against Moscow's population at large, Woland notes Margarita's rare combination of intelligence and passion and entices her into his servitude with the promise of helping her recover the master and his manuscripts. Without hesitation, Margarita agrees to leave her former life, to abandon the reality of the Moscow society in which she lives, and to serve instead as an honoree of a ludicrous ball for Satan and his past loyalists. Immediately, Margarita descends into metaphorical darkness, the intellectual unknown, to face

new “truths” as an alienated subject from another world. Throughout the night, she encounters and discusses such horrors as war, guilt, and the lack of mercy which permeates her world, yet the most important lesson for Margarita proceeds from a discussion between Woland and the beheaded Berlioz, whose corpse, like many others, has been revived for the occasion. Although Woland first cites his accuracy in predicting the timing and circumstances of Berlioz’s death, he transitions from this assertion of fact to a more relativistic challenge of the writer’s philosophical convictions:

You have always been an ardent preacher of the theory that, on the cutting off of his head, life ceases in a man, he turns to ashes and goes into non-being. I have the pleasure of informing you, in the presence of my guests, though they serve as proof of quite a different theory, that your theory is both solid and clever.

However, one theory is as good as another. There is also one which holds that it will be given to each according to his faith. Let it come true! You go into non-being, and from the cup into which you are to be transformed, I will joyfully drink to being! (Bulgakov 273)

Existence, from the perspective of Woland, directly results from a relativistic notion of truth, an open-mindedness that Berlioz refused to adopt in their original conversation. Thus intertwined, “being” and “knowledge” produce an ideal critical reader, as evidenced by Margarita and Pilate, respectively. Pilate, though his eternal existence will later be characterized by the torment of his personal guilt, nevertheless endures because he is willing to entertain new claims to the truth. His “being” does not necessarily connote peace or satisfaction, but it reinforces the perpetual search for truth that such relativist notions produce. Margarita, too, embodies the same open-mindedness that Pilate exhibits, because she suspends her disbelief towards Woland’s existence

in order to strive for the restoration of her master's work. Woland's philosophy, therefore, determines not only the life and death of his subjects, but also their relative satisfaction with the presentation of "truth" and "reality" in the world around them.

As the ball concludes, Margarita receives her master and his beloved manuscript, and the novel transitions once again to the Pilate story through Margarita's perspective as its reader. The language of Pilate's own descent into crime mirrors the demonic setting of Satan's ball, linking Pilate's stereotypical relativism with Woland's philosophy of being and non-being. Literal darkness consumes Yershalaim and, simultaneously, Pilate's physical isolation portends his psychological alienation from his duty as a Roman official. The narrator comments on Pilate's troubled mental state, as well as his complete solitude, stating that "had it not been" for the deafening storm which obscured Pilate's thoughts, "one might have heard that the procurator was muttering something, talking to himself" (Bulgakov 300). Though the narrator emphasizes his privileged position in knowing the internal musings of the story's hero, he emphasizes the alienation that Pilate experiences and, through the subsequent description of his physical transformation, reveals Pilate's similarities to Margarita in her desperation for truth. He elaborates on Pilate's isolated transformation: "And if the unsteady glimmering of the heavenly fire had turned into a constant light, an observer would have been able to see that the procurator's face, with eyes inflamed by recent insomnia and wine, showed impatience, that the procurator... was waiting for someone, impatiently waiting" (Bulgakov 300). Like Margarita, whose own appearance changes under the devilish influence of Woland's promises for intellectual fulfillment, Pilate also transforms in the darkness, defined now by his impatience in waiting for news that will confirm his success in ameliorating the wrongs of the day's events. Overtaken by his guilt, Pilate has murdered the man responsible for Yeshua's betrayal, in the

hopes that such retribution will restore his mental serenity. Enlightened by the words of Yeshua, Pilate seeks not to inflict further consequences on the people of Yershalaim, but rather to simply restore the philosopher to himself, in order to continue in their fruitful discussions.

Indeed, Pilate's desire for this intellectual revival manifests itself within his dream of perpetual debate between Yeshua and himself. The narrator's description of Pilate's dream emphasizes not only his alienation from the reality of his earthly life, but also the importance of the relativistic stance that Woland has advocated as the source of "being" and knowledge:

And once the procurator lost connection with what surrounded him in reality...he walked in the company of Banga, and beside him walked the wandering philosopher...They did not agree with each other in anything, and that made their argument especially interesting and endless. It went without saying that today's execution proved to be a sheer misunderstanding: here this philosopher, who had thought up such an incredibly absurd thing as that all men are good, was walking beside him, therefore he was alive (Bulgakov 319).

The existence of Pilate and Yeshua, in the context of this dream, relies upon their ability to discuss the deviations in their respective philosophies, their capacity for an "interesting and endless" debate on the merits of their intellectual convictions. Despite this idealized intellectual satisfaction within Pilate's dream, however, Matthew Levi dispels the procurator's hopes by reinforcing the constraining nature of "truth" in the reality of the world in which they live.

Though Pilate seeks redemption from Matthew Levi through the murder of Judas of Kiriath, the disciple refuses to accept such measures as equivalent to restoring Yeshua to life. He demands more parchment so that he may continue to write his own interpretation of Yeshua's life, and this perpetuation of false teachings reinstates the procurator's torment.

As the novel nears its conclusion, the Moscow and Pilate stories converge in a Romantic ending for the master and Pilate, facilitated by the critical readings of their stories and above all by Margarita's ceaseless advocacy for the master's genius. However, with each reunion the relevant characters become increasingly alienated from their conception of reality. The master and Margarita, together again for the first time in many years, retreat into their old house to revive their intellectual discussions in a place where there is "no one to eavesdrop" (Bulgakov 365). Thus isolated from Moscow, the two resolve to leave the earth entirely, to depart with Woland in order to preserve the intellectual ideal which he has facilitated for them. Through mortal death, the master and Margarita can permanently abandon the city in favor of the "peace" that Yeshua, after reading the master's work, declares they have earned (Bulgakov 360).

In fact, beginning with the feedback that Yeshua provides on the master's novel, Bulgakov closes his concurrent stories with an emphasis on the necessity of controversy in the quest for intellectual enlightenment. Woland foregrounds the fates of Pilate and the master in a discussion with Matthew Levi, the only writer in the novel who refuses to accept ambiguity as a fundamental component in the search for truth. Woland argues: "You uttered your words as if you don't acknowledge shadows, or evil either. Kindly answer the question: what would your good do if evil did not exist, and what would the earth look like if shadows disappeared from it? Shadows are cast by objects and people. Do you want to skin the whole earth, tearing all the trees and living things off it, because of your fantasy of enjoying bare light?" (Bulgakov 360). Thus removed from the Muscovites whose loyalty and respect he demanded unquestioningly, Woland reveals his concept of the truth, defined not by the "light" of certainty, but rather by the nuanced "darkness" of the divergent philosophies which exist in the world. Yeshua and Woland, both recognizing the merits of uncertainty and its subsequent intellectual enlightenment, thus enable

the heroes of the novel – Pilate and the literary master– to achieve “peace” through enduring intellectual debate. The master finds the strength to “finish” his novel, not by instituting an answer to Pilate’s confusion, but rather by allowing him to fulfill his dream of debating endlessly with Yeshua himself. In the same way, the master receives his own freedom, defined by Margarita as a world of “wise reason,” “visits” from “interesting” individuals and, above all, the constant companionship of the woman who inspired his novel in the first place.

Implicit in this intellectual fulfillment, however, is an overarching impracticality in the alienation effect among the novel’s authors and readers. Because such satisfaction can only be accomplished by rejecting and abandoning reality, Bulgakov implies that the “peace” of his Moscow and Pilate stories is untenable for those who remain in the real world. Achieving an unrestricted pursuit of truth through intellectual discourse requires that the agents involved transcend their everyday existence, and the master’s “freedom” depends upon the loss of his “anxious, needled memory” (Bulgakov 384). Though the master and Pilate have been enlightened by a new understanding of truth, they cannot perpetuate these intellectual ideas in the realities in which they previously existed. Given this contradictory conclusion for the novel’s main characters, Bulgakov includes an epilogue to offer his practical interpretation of the alienation effect upon those who are left behind, who are not worthy to transcend their realities in pursuit of truth.

Through the narration of the epilogue, the novel’s omniscient narrator describes the effect of Woland’s presence upon Moscow’s uneducated population and the more surprising ideological subjugation of the city’s intellectuals. Much like Natasha’s reaction to the horrors of Moscow, the Muscovites en masse respond to Woland’s presence with hysteria, placing even more trust in the power of their state authorities. As the police recover each disappeared member

of Moscow society, the victims conclude their testimonies with requests to be protected in the state prison. As they perpetuate the absurd “truths” that they have witnessed, they request automatically to have these claims silenced by the national disciplinary system. Without any effort from the police themselves, the populace of Moscow voluntarily subjects itself to reigning ideology, fearful of the consequences of breaking free from the only reality that they know. Moreover, as the intellectuals refuse to acknowledge the presence of an alternative “truth” within their society, the narrator emphasizes the irony of their stupidity: “The most developed and cultured people to be sure, took no part in this tale-telling about the unclean powers that had visited Moscow, even laughed at them and tried to bring the tellers to reason. But all the same a fact, as they say, is a fact, and to brush it aside without explanation is simply impossible: someone had visited the capital” (Bulgakov 385). A “writer of these truthful lines,” the narrator explains the incredulity of Russian intellectuals with mockery, as he clearly defends the story of Woland as truth by passing the story to the readers of the novel. Moreover, he echoes Woland’s condemnation of Berlioz at Satan’s ball with the phrase “a fact, as they say, is a fact,” to recall not only Woland’s contradiction of the writer’s intellectual certainty, but also his superior claim to relativistic knowledge and the search for truth. The Moscow intellectuals, so lauded for their insight into culture and philosophy, cannot adapt to the new truths introduced by Woland’s visit to the capital city. By rejecting new ideas, the Russian intelligentsia of the novel fall victim to the same ideological subjugation of the masses that they seek to educate. The alienation effect deteriorates, on one hand, out of fear and, on the other, out of intellectual certainty of a sole interpretation of the truth.

By the novel’s conclusion, only one critical figure remains in the whole of Moscow – the writer and reader, Ivan “Homeless” Nikolaevich. The novel’s *mise en abyme* functions one last

time, in this case to draw a parallel between the newfound torment of the Moscow poet and the resolved suffering of the master and Pilate. Forever confined to the mental hospital, Homeless dreams of Pilate's dream, and after observing the procession of the reunited Pilate and Yeshua, he turns to his own "wandering philosopher," the restored master himself. The narrator describes the final conversation of the novel:

'So it ended with that?'

'It ended with that, my disciple,' answers number one-eighteen...

The next morning he wakes up silent but perfectly calm and well. His needed memory grows quiet, and until the next full moon no one will trouble the professor – neither the noseless killer of Gestas, nor the cruel fifth procurator of Judea, the equestrian Pontius Pilate. (Bulgakov 396)

Ivan's eternal torment involves his critical interpretation of the master's story. Observing the resolution between Pilate and Yeshua, troubled by the execution and its other victims, and fascinated by the narrative process that he has witnessed, Ivan remains in the world of Moscow while still at odds with the majority opinion that pervades the city. He is an alienated reader, and thus an empowered writer. According to the master's final requests, he has abandoned his prior modes of poetic discourse to adopt instead the inspirational discourse of critical thinking which the master has created in his novel.

For it is, in practice, simply not possible to adopt such a critical attitude towards an employer and at the same time provide good service...a butler who is forever attempting to formulate his own 'strong opinions' on his employer's affairs is bound to lack one quality essential in all good professionals: namely, loyalty.

- Stevens, *The Remains of the Day*

IV. Professionalism and Blind Discipleship in Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*

In his novel, *The Remains of the Day*, Kazuo Ishiguro employs Brecht's alienation technique through the fictional diary entries of his main character, an English butler named Stevens. Through his nostalgic flashbacks, Stevens unwittingly exposes his master, Lord Darlington, as a Nazi sympathizer and shows the significance of Darlington Hall in the context of British politics during WWII. Despite his interactions with modern world leaders, however, Stevens remains focused solely upon his duty to professionalism, and his ignorance of British politics for the sake of his employer grounds Ishiguro's own political message in the novel. As Lord Darlington, who typifies the virtues of English nobility, interacts with Nazi sympathizers and other influential ambassadors at Darlington Hall, Stevens serves his employer's will unquestioningly, not comprehending the repercussions of such informal international affairs. With the end of the war, however, comes the onset of a new political point of view, as Darlington estate falls under the control of its American owner, Mr. Farraday. Under Farraday's unorthodox management, Stevens decides to take a vacation, and this physical alienation from his home facilitates his critical assessment of new political ideals in England – ideas which he has not encountered as a butler in isolation. As he travels the English countryside, Stevens encounters new language which alienates him from his presiding ideology and, as a result, the novel concludes with his own confession of ignorance. Nevertheless, while Stevens recognizes

the folly of his prior loyalty, he cannot abandon his identity as a servant to the upper class. For that reason, though alienated, Stevens' ideological stance is not fundamentally changed. The power of language to redistribute the perceptible within Stevens' conception of Darlington Hall cannot undermine his ideological mindset towards professional servitude.

From the outset of the novel, Stevens strives to inhabit the standards of nobility, not in order to achieve social mobility, but rather to serve his employer and distinguish himself from butlers of marginal quality. He emphasizes dignity as a key component of the “professionalism” which he perpetually exemplifies, describing his attitude with the imagery of a English gentleman: “[Great butlers] wear their professionalism as a decent gentleman will wear his suit: he will not let ruffians or circumstances tear it off him in the public gaze; he will discard it when, and only when, he wills to do so, and this will invariably be when he is entirely alone” (Ishiguro 43). Determined to deliver consistent service to Lord Darlington, Stevens prides himself on operating through even the most harrowing of distractions – as his father suffers from the stroke that will kill him, Stevens refuses to spare more than five minutes from his attendance to the nobility of that night's social function. Moreover, in contrast to the apparent economic motivations of his father, Stevens expresses his contentedness with his place in society, with the combination of sufficient wages and the superior “moral worth” of his employer. He describes the world not as a ladder upon which the social strata can move, but rather as a wheel with fixed axles, representing the most influential estates in the English countryside at the center and, at the periphery, “all else, rich and poor, who revolved around [their mighty decisions]” (Ishiguro 115) From this point of view, Stevens' concept of professionalism perpetuates his role as a domestic servant, and his perspective develops in response to this social immobility: “...each of [our generation] harboured the desire to make our own small contribution to the creation of a better

world, and saw that, as professionals, the surest means of doing so would be to serve the great gentlemen of our times into whose hands civilization had been entrusted” (Ishiguro 116). Thus, Stevens’ conception of professionalism pertains to the working class mentality; without his occupation as a servant he would not only fail to fulfill his professional duty, but also would be unable to contribute to the resolution of post-war social turmoil.

Despite Stevens’ contentedness with his own social status, his code of professional dignity neglects the political milieu of England following World War II and, consequently, he develops his loyalty to Darlington without a critical understanding of his master’s political views. In her essay “Ishiguro’s *Remains of the Day*: The Empire Strikes Back,” Meera Tamaya explains the historical implications of Darlington’s diplomacy, as well as how these actions contribute to Stevens’ subjugation: “The truth is that Lord Darlington, far from having been admirable, was actually a crypto Fascist, busily engaged in the appeasement of Hitler. Influenced by Sir Oswald Mosley, the leader of the notorious British Union of Fascists...Darlington believes that the world should properly be divided into two classes: the strong and the weak” (Tamaya 51). Darlington not only promotes the ideology which insures Stevens’ loyal service, but he also pledges his own service to radical individuals despite his merely basic understanding of world events.

Stevens’ recollection of the international conference held at Darlington Hall reflects his own naiveté as well as his master’s flawed approach to international politics. Motivated by Darlington’s ambition to achieve “justice in this world,” Stevens exhibits his own false sense of importance through the militaristic language with which he describes his preparations for the dinner:

I thus set about preparing for the days ahead as, I imagine, a general might prepare for a battle: I devised with utmost care a special staff plan anticipating all sorts of eventualities; I analyzed where our weakest points lay and set about making contingency plans to fall back upon in the event of these points giving way; I even gave the staff a military-style ‘pep talk,’ impressing upon them that, for all their having to work at an exhausting rate, they could feel great pride in discharging their duties over the days that lay ahead. (Ishiguro 77)

On one hand, Stevens’ language suggests that he understands, at least superficially, the strategy and leadership necessary for a military victory. However, by equating the casualties of battle to the inconsequential pitfalls of house maintenance, his attitude also connotes a marginal understanding of the nuclear warfare, mass genocide, and other horrors of the latest armed conflict in Europe. As the weekend concludes, however, the cynical American delegate Mr. Lewis speaks to a parallel misunderstanding on the part of Lord Darlington himself. Referring to Darlington’s noble pretensions as the ideas of an “amateur gentleman,” he subverts the very system of nobility by which Lord Darlington and his employees operate: “...let me ask you, have you any idea what sort of place the world is becoming all around you? The days when you could act out your noble instincts are over. Except of course, you here in Europe don’t yet seem to know it... You here in Europe need professionals to run your affairs” (Ishiguro 102). Lewis’ direct contradiction of Stevens’ working-class professional identity also draws attention to Darlington’s lack of qualifications to deal with modern politics. As an elite member of English society, Darlington possesses no unique understanding of warfare, just as Stevens hardly exemplifies the courage of a military general despite his illusions of such heroism. Regardless of the criticism towards Lord Darlington, however, Stevens continues to serve him diligently,

insisting upon the validity of his ambition and remaining purposefully blind to opposing points of view.

Although Stevens remains staunchly loyal to Darlington in his first diary entries, he becomes increasingly aware of his master's flaws as his physical alienation from Darlington Hall exposes him to contrary opinions of traditional English class hierarchy. On one hand, Farraday's presence at the estate immediately signals a change in the household's structure, due primarily to his American heritage. Governed by preconceived stereotypes of the English countryside, Farraday entreats Stevens to secure him a staff and overall experience "worthy of a grand old English house" upon his arrival in London (Ishiguro 6). Indeed, in this way, Farraday is almost as ignorant of English traditions as Darlington was of modern world event, yet Stevens' complaint rests not in Farraday's ignorance, but rather in his desire to change the house's social structure and thus alter its potential for the influence that it held during Lord Darlington's time. He remarks on the inability of the house to host "large social occasions" as in the past, due to Farraday's more economic management of the staff resources. Nevertheless, Stevens remains conscious of his professional dignity, avoiding the desire to "[cling] as some do to tradition merely for its own sake" (Ishiguro 7). Though Stevens' has been conditioned to the ways of Lord Darlington, Farraday's new customs force Stevens to recognize the possibility that his traditions are not infallible, nor perpetuated within post-war English society.

More importantly, Farraday's arrival on the Darlington estate coincides not only with Stevens' alienation from language – both through Farraday's own American vernacular and Miss Kenton's unanticipated letter – but also with his physical alienation from the estate itself. In the first place, Mr. Farraday's use of witty banter threatens Stevens' confidence in satisfying his professional duty: "Perhaps I was expected to laugh heartily; or indeed, reciprocate with some

remark of my own. This last possibility is one that has given me some concern over these months, and is something about which I still feel undecided. For it may well be that in America, it is all part of what is considered good professional service that an employee provide entertaining banter” (Ishiguro 15). Again, as Farraday contradicts Stevens’ sense of propriety, he simultaneously alienates Stevens’ from the certainty he feels towards his behavior. Whereas, under Darlington, his professional tone caused little controversy, Stevens can no longer be certain that he is fulfilling his professional duties with his modern employer. In a similar way, Miss Kenton’s letter – the first in seven years – endows Stevens’ memory of the past with ambiguity. With these two influences, Stevens rationalizes a vacation from Darlington Hall, presumably to fulfill his duty to Farraday, but in truth to explore the inconsistencies between his current reality and his memory of the past.

Although Stevens remains certain of his professional dignity as his journey begins, his inability to adapt to the unrefined language of the English countryside causes him to doubt his sense of working class superiority as well as his interpretations of the past. After failing to deliver a joke successfully, Stevens considers the lack of wisdom inherent in his inexperience: “By the very nature of a witticism, one is given very little time to assess its various possible repercussions before one is called to give voice to it, and one gravely risks uttering all manner of unsuitable things if one has not first acquired the necessary skill and experience” (Ishiguro 132). Almost immediately after this admission, Stevens also begins to question his reading of Miss Kenton’s letter. Having been publicly reminded of his weaknesses in colloquial English, he recognizes other elements of “wishful thinking of a professional kind” that could have clouded his judgment (Ishiguro 140). That is, although he desperately wants Miss Kenton to return to employment at Darlington Hall, a rereading of the letter reveals that he has misinterpreted the

certainty of her message. Much like the question of witticisms, Stevens has attempted to realize his “professional” goals prematurely, and has therefore experienced the disappointment of his unfounded confidence.

Most importantly, this blow to Stevens’ internal sense of superiority over the “agricultural people of one sort or another” necessitates, in turn, that he defend his high esteem for Lord Darlington. Although the villagers say nothing about Darlington in their conversations with Stevens, the butler associates his misreading of language and writing with the potential for misremembering the moral decency of his previous employer. Rather than defend Lord Darlington’s innocence, Stevens emphasizes the universality of such behavior:

It is, however, rather irksome to have to hear people talking today as though Lord Darlington was alone in believing Herr Ribbentrop an honourable gentleman and developing a working relationship with him...The great hypocrisy of these persons would be instantly obvious to you were you to see just a few of their own guest lists from those days; you would see then not only the extent to which Herr Ribbentrop dined at these same persons’ tables, but that he often did so as a guest of honour. (Ishiguro 136)

In contrast to his previous praise of Darlington’s pure aspirations for “justice in this world,” Stevens now acknowledges the controversial nature of his employer’s actions and their negative effects on post-war England. Nevertheless, this recognition stops short of Darlington’s outright condemnation. Just as Stevens rationalizes his lack of colloquial English with the fact that he demands a higher standard of proficiency in any new language – a standard worthy of his “professional dignity” – so also does he minimize Darlington’s negative influence with the idea that, among the other Englishmen who entertained such Nazi sympathizers, his employer

remained honest about his motives and intentions. In both cases, Stevens clings to his identity as a working-class professional in order to disregard the rumors and shortcomings which he experiences.

Although Stevens' reverent attitude toward Darlington persists throughout most of his journey, his complete alienation occurs in Moscombe, at the moment when the native Englishmen of the town undermine the inherent dignity of his professional identity. Mistaken for a gentleman after his car breaks down, Stevens begins his visit to Moscombe with the satisfaction that his level of dignity has been confused with that of an elite member of English society. At dinner, however, the villagers begin to criticize the elitist attitudes of nobility in general, rather than targeting Lord Darlington's action specifically. In the unrefined vernacular of his upbringing, Harry Smith engages Stevens in a debate over the meaning of dignity in a world wrecked by war. Smith's perspective, unlike Stevens', considers the modern changes to traditional English society, the sacrifices that men have made to live a free life in England, and most importantly, the respect that these men deserve. With his assertion, "Dignity's not just something for gentlemen," Smith succeeds in alienating Stevens entirely from his abiding personal philosophy (Ishiguro 186). Remembering the warnings that Darlington received at the controversial international dinner years ago, Stevens observes that his noble pretensions fall short of the courage which these townspeople possess. Though originally repelled by the "strong opinions" voiced by such a commoner, Stevens condemns his own motives upon further reflection: "Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man...He chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that...All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really – one has to ask oneself – what dignity is there in that?"

(Ishiguro 243). Still convinced of Lord Darlington's own dignity, Stevens opposes the blind loyalty which he exhibited toward his master's decisions. Only by having his dignity subverted by the meaningful, albeit unprofessional, accusations of Harry Smith can Stevens separate himself from the inaccurate nostalgia of his past. Alienation through language, in this case, enlightens the butler's conception of professional dignity; without forming his own opinions, without adapting to the modern world around him, he will remain a blind follower of tradition without the dignity which he desires.

Although Stevens no longer feels an obligation to defend Lord Darlington's legacy, Stevens' alienation from his loyalty to his employer does not accomplish a true redistribution of his perceptible view of his working-class professional identity. He condemns himself for blindly trusting in the controversial ideology of one man, yet he remains trapped in the search for dignity in his occupation. As he embarks on his journey home, rather than exploring new political philosophies out of his own curiosity, Stevens resolves to work with renewed effort toward adopting the witticisms of Mr. Farraday. Thus his previous mistake manifests itself once again. Without the obligations of a preexisting ideology, Stevens seeks a new duty which he can strive to fulfill, a new leader who he can blindly follow in the hopes of satisfying his professional role.

V. Conclusions

In 1968, Rancière argued that Althusser had ruined Marxist orthodoxy by privileging the intellectual over the masses and implying that the working class could not independently reach a revolutionary state of mind. However, from Althusser's point of view, the realities of World War II had demonstrated that, contrary to Rancière's conception of revolution, ideas do not exist within a vacuum. Cruel dictators transformed Marxist ideology from a philosophy of mass empowerment to a means of widespread repression, and the masses, as victims of this perverted ideology, largely lost their capacity to revolt. As the only source of writing beyond state-sponsored publications, therefore, writers possessed a unique responsibility. From Brecht's response to Hitler's National Socialism, through Bulgakov's satire of Stalinist Russia, and finally to Ishiguro's analysis of London's complicity in WWII terror, the trend of authorial critique falls more in favor of Althusser's conception of ideology than of Rancière's idealized confidence in the uneducated populace. These authors had directly observed the effects of ideological subjugation and felt that the novel, more than any other genre, could expose ideology's influence over their readership. The alienation effect in each of these novels, rather than emphasizing the elitism of intellectuals, works instead to empower the masses toward an intellectual critique of their daily lives. By expanding the pool of critical thinking, Brecht, Bulgakov, Ishiguro, and countless other authors of the time period hoped to subvert the power of ideology with the independent thinking of the common man.

Bibliography

- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971. Print.
- Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Art and Politics*. Ed. Tom Kuhn and Steve Giles. London: Methuen, 2003. Print.
- Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Ed. and Trans. John Willett. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964. Print.
- Brecht, Bertolt. *Threepenny Novel*. Trans. Desmond I. Vesey. New York: Grove Press, 1956. Print.
- Bulgakov, Mikhail. *The Master and Margarita*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. London: Penguin, 1966. Print.
- Carney, Sean. *Brecht and Critical Theory: Dialectics and contemporary aesthetics*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Print.
- Flaubert, Gustave. *Madame Bovary*. Trans. Geoffrey Wall. New York: Penguin, 1992. Print.
- Giles, Steve. *Bertolt Brecht and Critical Theory: Marxism, Modernity, and the Threepenny Lawsuit*. Bern: Peter Lang, 1997. Print.
- Ishiguro, Kazuo. *The Remains of the Day*. Vintage International Ed. New York: Random, 1988. Print.
- Kalb, Judith. *Russia's Rome: Imperial Visions, Messianic Dreams, 1890-1940*. Madison: U of Wisconsin Press, 2008. Print.
- Kemp-Welch, A. *Stalin and the Literary Intelligentsia, 1928-39*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991. Print.

- Platt, Kevin M. F. and David Brandenberger. *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*. Madison: U of Wisconsin Press, 2006. Print.
- Rancière, Jacques. *Althusser's Lesson*. Trans. Emiliano Battista. London: Continuum, 2011. Print.
- Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Trans. Gabriel Rockhill. London: Continuum, 2004. Print.
- Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Literature*. Trans. Julie Rose. Cambridge: Polity, 2011. Print.
- Rancière, Jacques: "Why Emma Bovary Had to Be Killed." *Critical Inquiry*, (34:2). 2008 Winter, 233-248 (2008). Print.
- Rippey, Theodore F. "Brecht and Exile: Poetry after Weimar, Poetics during Blitzkrieg." *Monatshefte* 101.1, University of Wisconsin Press. (Spring 2009): 37-55. JSTOR. 20 Feb 2013. Web. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20622157>>.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *What is Literature?* Trans. Bernard Frechtman. New York: Routledge Classics, 2001. Print.
- Suvin, Darko. "The Mirror and the Dynamo: On Brecht's Aesthetic Point of View." *TDR* 12.1: The MIT Press (1967). JSTOR. 2 Feb 2013. Web. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1125293>>.
- Tamaya, Meera. "Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day*: The Empire Strikes Back." *Modern Language Studies* 22.2 (1992): 45-56. JSTOR. 4 April 2013. Web. <<http://jstor.org.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/stable/3195017>>.
- Weir, Justin. *The Author as Hero: Self and Tradition in Bulgakov, Pasternak, and Nabokov*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern U Press, 2002.

Ziolkowski, Margaret. *Literary Exorcisms of Stalinism: Russian Writers and the Soviet Past*.

Columbia: Camden House, Inc, 1998. Print.