

الباحث

أ.د انسام رياض عبد الله

م.م فرح جاسب حسن

مسرحية المرأة الصالحة في سيتشوان من منظور لاكان، والأنا البديلة، والتفرد اليونغي

Researcher

Prof. Ansam Riyadh Abdullah

Lect. Asst. Farah Chassib Hassan

*The Good Woman of Szechwan Through Lens of Lacan, the Alter-Ego,
and Jungian Individuation*

عنوان البحث

مسرحية المرأة الصالحة في سبتشوان من منظور
لاكان، والأنا البديلة، والتفرد اليونغي

ملخص البحث

تُصوّر مسرحية برتولت بريشت "المرأة الصالحة من سبتشوان" شخصية شين تي، البطلة المنقسمة جذرياً، والتي تخلق شخصية بديلة ذكورية، وهي شوي تا، للبقاء على قيد الحياة في عالم اجتماعي واقتصادي قاسٍ. وتتيح قراءة المسرحية من منظور لاکاني ويونغي فهماً أعمق لكيفية تصوير بريشت لتكوين الذات واغترابها وتحولها المحتمل. ويُبين وصف لاکان للأنا كبناء تخيلي وللشخصية البديلة الانقسام الاستراتيجي الذي قامت به شين تي لذاتها كنتيجة للقيود التخيلية والرمزية؛ بينما تُقدّم تفرد يونغ غائبة وأخلاقيات لدمج المتناقضات وتحقيق التكامل النفسي.

. تجادل هذه الورقة تقلب شين تي بين الكرم والقسوة حيث يسلط الكاتب الضوء على كل من التجزئة التي حددها لاکان والديناميكيات التعويضية التي رآها يونغ ضرورية للتفرد، في حين أن يقاوم المسرح الملحمي لبريشت الحلول النفسية السهلة ويطرح بدلاً من ذلك أسئلة سياسية حول ما إذا كان التفرد ممكناً في ظل العلاقات الاجتماعية الرأسمالية.

معلومات الباحث

اسم الباحث الأول: أ.د. انسام رياض عبدالله
البريد الإلكتروني: Sbc.s5@tu.edu.iq
الاختصاص العام: اللغة الانكليزية وادابها
الاختصاص الدقيق: ادب انكليزي
مكان العمل الحالي: جامعة تكريت
القسم: تربية انكليزي
الكلية: تربية بنات
الجامعة او المؤسسة:
البلد: العراق

اسم الباحث الثاني: م.م فرح جاسب حسن
البريد الإلكتروني: farah.hasan@uoalkitab.edu.iq
الاختصاص العام: اللغة الانكليزية وادابها
الاختصاص الدقيق: ادب انكليزي
القسم: علوم الحياة
الكلية: العلوم
الجامعة او المؤسسة: جامعة الكتاب
البلد: العراق

الكلمات المفتاحية:

برتولت بريشت، المرأة الصالحة من سبتشوان، ثنائية شين تي/شوي تا، الذات المنقسمة/الهوية المنقسمة، نظرية لاکان، نظرية يونغ

معلومات البحث

تاريخ استلام البحث: ٢٠٢٦/٢/١٦

القبول: ٢٠٢٦/٣/٥



Researcher information

1st.Researcher: Prof. Dr. Ansam Riyadh

Abdullah Almaarouf

E-mail. : Sbc.s5@tu.edu.iq

General Specialization: English Literature

Specialization: English literature

College: Education for Women

Department: English Education

University or Institution: Tikrit university

Country: Iraq

2st. Researcher: Farah Chassib Hasan

E.mail: farah.hasan@uoalkitab.edu.iq

General Specialization: English Literature

Specialization: English literature

Department: Biology

College: Science

University or Institution: Al.Kitab

University

Country: Iraq

Key words: Bertolt Brecht, The Good Woman of Szechuan, Shen Te / Shui Ta duality, Split self / divided identity, Lacanian theory, Jungian theory

Search information

Search Receipt history: 16/2/2026

Acceptance: 5/3/2026

The Title

The Good Woman of Szechuan
Through Lens of Lacan, the Alter-Ego,
and Jungian Individuation

Abstract

Bertolt Brecht's play *The Good Woman of Szechuan* portrays a radically divided protagonist, Shen Te, who creates the male alter ego, Shui Ta, to survive in an aggressive social and economic world. A textual analysis from a Lacanian and Jungian perspective is used to show a deeper understanding of how Brecht depicts the formation, alienation, and potential transformation of the self. Lacan's description of the ego as an imaginary construct and of the alter-ego illustrates Shen-Te's strategic division of the self as an effect of imaginary and symbolic constraints; while Jung's singularity provides a teleology and ethics for merging opposites and achieving psychological integration.

This study shows that Shen Te's fluctuation between generosity and ruthlessness highlights both the fragmentation Lacan identified and the compensatory dynamics Jung saw as necessary for individuation, while Brecht's epic theater resists easy psychological solutions and instead poses political questions about whether individuation is possible under capitalist social relations.

The Good Woman of Szechwan through lens of Lacan, the Alter-Ego, and Jungian Individuation

Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) was a German poet, playwright, and theatrical reformer who became one of the most influential playwrights of the 20th century. He served briefly in World War I, studied medicine and theatre, and began publishing plays and poems in the 1920s. He was heavily influenced by Marxism and by theatrical artists. His brief medical studies and his Marxist political views directly shaped his dramatic writing.

Brecht developed epic theatre, a style that aims to push the audience toward critical thinking rather than emotional identification with theatrical illusion. His political exile under Nazi rule (mid-1930s) and his residence in the United States and East Germany shaped his commitment to theatre as a means of social critique (Willett, Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic. , 1964) Brecht wrote *The Good Woman of Szechuan* (first drafts in the early 1940s; later staged in various versions) as an allegory showing how social and economic structures make moral behaviour almost impossible. Brecht's style in writing, for example, his use of songs, visual changes in the scene, characters speaking directly to the audience, is designed to alienate the spectator so that he analyses the text socially, politically or psychologically to detach the spectator from engaging in the text emotionally.

Brecht's play revolves around a poor prostitute, Shen Te, who is rewarded by the gods for her hospitality and kindness; they give her money to open her own business, which is a tobacco shop. As John Willett notes, Brecht “sets up goodness not as a virtue to be praised but as a problem to be solved” (Willett, 1964, p.183). Hans-Thies (Lehmann, 2016) states that Brecht “makes visible the contradictions of morality under material pressure” (Lehmann, 2016) The contradictions can be shown by Shen Te's hospitality; her kindness received more exploitation, which proves that goodness cannot be isolated from social change.

To confront the exploitation that she has been exposed to by others, she uses her cousin's identity to make difficult and cruel decisions. Thus, the play highlights a split subjectivity (Shen Te/Shui Ta) that represents both a pragmatic and moral controversial question: can "good" survive under an unjust economic system? Brecht's drama deliberately highlights the internal contradiction, encouraging the audience to think politically rather than emotionally (Thomson, (1994)) The play consists of a prologue, 10 episodic scenes, and an epilogue. It is episodic rather than linear, meaning each scene functions almost as a semi-

independent unit. Events are linked causally but loosely, emphasising social conditions rather than psychological development.

2. Literature Review

i. The Psychoanalytic Turn in the Humanities: Theoretical and Translational Portraits of Psychoanalysis in Literature

Psychoanalytic literary theory has served as one of the principal interpretive paradigms for reading subject formation, desire, repression and so forth—the symbolic structures that make character and plot. In contemporary theatre studies, psychoanalysis is prized less for “reading characters” than for its explanations of how dramaturgy, language, and performance present unconscious conflict — frequently through fractured bodies, doubles, compulsive repetition and failed recognition. Recent synthetic overviews of psychoanalytic literary theory (including your own) foreground the field’s primary interest in how texts dramatise tensions between conscious self-narration and unconscious drives, and how symbolic systems govern identity formation.

Psychoanalytic Literary Theory (2026) is helpful here as a framing reference; the description of psychoanalysis as an interpretive toolkit for reading motivation, fantasy, and symbolic authority in literary texts supports the study’s decision to treat Shen Te/Shui Ta not as “mere characterisation” but rather a staged structure of psychic and social division.

ii. A Lacanian framework for theatre: desire, lack, and the body within the Symbolic order

Within psychoanalytic criticism, Lacanian approaches have gained particular influence in the realm of drama because theatre can take place at the junctions of: (1) the Imaginary (misrecognition, identity-image), (2) the Symbolic (law, language, social order), and (3) the Real (rupture, trauma, what is resistant to symbolization). Most recent work in Lacanian drama criticism articulates violence, desire and embodiment through the instability of the Symbolic and an ever-present “lack” that propels subjects toward impossible objects of completion.

For instance, (Almaarroof, 2025)The piece overtly features Lacan’s three registers, the mirror stage, lack/objet petit a and body as a site of ideological and psychic violence inscribed. This is particularly at home in your project because it gives mathematical form to a way of mapping Lacanian descriptions into dramatic structure: Kane’s theatre comes alive through gestures of the eruption

of the Real and bodily extremes, while Arbery's operates through the ideological violence of the Symbolic order and the gaze cast by the Other.

From a methodological standpoint, this study validates the selected approach in two ways: it engages with drama not as a privileged site for simply illustrating Lacanian structures but rather as a means of staging those structures, and it traces how social systems (ideology, norms, authority) read Symbolic pressures on the formation of desire and identity.

The analysis extends this trajectory by moving the object of analysis from overt violence/ desire (Kane and Arbery) to Brecht's ethical-economical quandary: how a subject performs goodness within exploitative conditions, where the Symbolic order (law, capitalism, moral demand) is precisely unlivable.

iii. Brecht criticism and the Shen Te/Shui Ta divider: contradiction staged as social process

Critics of Brecht invariably point out that *The Good Person of Szechwan* dramatises contradiction without catharsis, or classical resolution. The play's central device — the split between Shen Te and her "cousin," Shui Ta — has often been read as a social-ethical dialectic: goodness cannot endure under capitalism without becoming complicit in violence. What matters to the current psychoanalytic frame is that Brecht will not let this contradiction stay "inside" psychology; he stages it as a process in the social world and almost dares you to judge the conditions that make such a thing possible.

Another theme is gender, a widespread scholarly conversation: It should be noted that Shen Te's "goodness" is regulated differently because she is female, many critics agree, and translations which foreground "woman" (rather than "person") can change the interpretive emphasis. This gendered framing is significant for the psychoanalytic reading because it makes clear how the Symbolic order maps moral expectation and social punishment onto the coordinates of gender.

iv. When Psychoanalysis Meets Brecht: the dialectics of a productive tension

A stock objection is that Brecht's epic theatre eschews the psychologizing of characters—his project seeks social critique, not inner depth. Psychoanalytic criticism remains fruitful, however, so long as it does not reduce Brecht to individual pathology. But Lacan allows you to make sense of why Shen Te's "goodness," in your terms, is structurally impossible in a Symbolic order that demands both altruism and survival in the market logic. The split position of the Lacanian subject is thus used as a means to describe how ethical agency is

ruptured by the social law. Psychoanalysis thus becomes less “character psychology,” then, and more a language for describing subjectivity as produced by power, ideology, and discourse—precisely the problem Brecht plays out.

It is here, though, that this study can be considered to have some degree of spontaneity: it deploys Lacan not as a means of domesticating Brecht into the order of psychology, but rather uses Lacan in order to theorise how the split subject gets staged in response to the violence employed by the social order.

v. Jungian criticism and the ethics of individuation

If Lacan presents a theory of structural division (lack, the split subject, the ‘subject’ in language), Jung offers a theory of psychic integration (individuation, shadow, persona). Jungian criticism tends to read doubles and masks as dramatisations of repressed psychic material: what the subject cannot admit returns in the form of a split figure. The shadow aspect of Jung’s theory is useful for your argument, because Shen Te/Shui Ta can be regarded as a theatrical externalisation of the conflict between persona (acceptable social identity) and shadow (strategic aggression or survival instinct).

But Jung also sets up a theoretical risk: individuation suggests the possibility of eventual integration, while Brecht’s play argues that contradiction remains because it is socially produced. This tension becomes in turn the strongest dialectical motor of your paper: Jung contributes a description of the shape split takes; Brecht helps us understand why politically “integration” is blocked; Lacan clarifies how desire and identity continue to be structured by lack “inscribed in the Symbolic.”

Two gaps across existing criticism remain particularly relevant. The first one is that social critique or psychic structure wins, but they rarely get integrated except by shortchanging one for the other. Brecht scholarship tends toward class/ethics, psychoanalytic criticism personalises what becomes a systemic contradiction for Brecht. In other words, gender, ethics and subject-formation are not necessarily theorised together. The play’s moral economy is highly gendered (the “good woman/person” is judged by social expectations), but many of the audience’s readings stayed at describing that split, and not explaining its symbolic mechanics.

The study contributes because it constructs a triangulated model, so Lacan explicates how the Symbolic order splits subjects and produces contradictory toeing the line of identity performance (Shen Te vs. Shui Ta). Jung explains how doubling and masking serve as dramatisations of repressed psychic contents and the parameters of “integration.” Brecht explains why the

contradiction cannot be resolved as private psychology: it is a function of capitalist relations and moral ideology.

In short, this project establishes *The Good Person of Szechwan* as a laboratory in which psychic splitting and social contradiction converge—arguing that individuation is not just a personal journey but a politically conditioned possibility.

1. Theoretical Framework

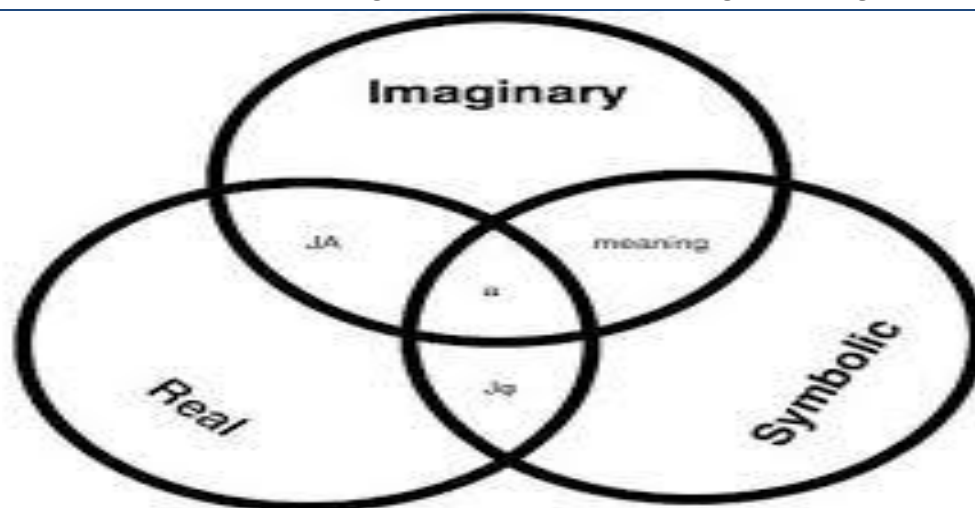
i- Lacan: Split Subject and Alter Ego

Jacques Lacan (1901–1981), a French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist, reinterpreted Freud through the lens of structural linguistics, philosophy, and semiotics. A central idea of his premise is that the human subject is "split" (le sujet barré)—split between the conscious self (the speaking self) and the unconscious (the self-spoken by language). The imaginary stage for Lacan is the first formation of the ego; the ego forms by identifying with an external image — a fantasy of wholeness.

Lacan first formulated this idea in "The Mirror Stage" (1936, developed in 1949): the child's identification with his/her reflection produces an imaginary unity, an idealised image. The mirror stage explains the development of the self through recognition in the mirror, which is extremely important in the formation of the ego. But this ego is built on misperception, and it conceals an internal fragmentation (Lacan J. , 1977)

Lacan's most famous work is his book " *Écrits*" published in 1966, a collection of his major essays and seminars, particularly on psychoanalysis, structuralism, and post-structuralism. Lacan developed an interest in formalism, logic, and topology, leading to his focus on mathematics and abstract structures in his later works. In his final seminars, he explored gender and real difference. Later, Lacan explains that the introduction of the symbolic order (language, law, culture) intensifies the division of the self. Once we become speaking beings, language shapes our desires and identities; we are never entirely in agreement with what we say or what we want. Thus, the "unconscious self" is always divided between what can be said and what remains repressed or unspoken.

Lacan formulated three levels: the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. This is his central framework; these three levels form the backbone of his psychoanalytic theory. Lacan's intellectual development was often fragmented by the dominance of a single mode over time: the imaginative mode in its early stages (1930s and 1940s), the symbolic mode in its mid-stage (1950s), and the Real in its late stages (1960s and 1970s).



By the 1970s, Lacan had also emphasised the interconnectedness of these modes, employing the metaphor of the Borromean knot.

ii. Jung: Individuation and Integration of Opposites

Individuation is extremely emphasised by C. Jung, who defines it as an important process in which the fragmented person becomes whole, and this process leads to self-awareness. C. Jung presents a model of the human psyche that has the personal and the collective unconscious. He reveals the importance of the multilayered structure of the psyche, whose conscious and unconscious components – both personal and collective – play a significant role. In modern society, people lose the connection with their identity because of social rules and other strict factors. This is precisely why the concept of individuation gains renewed relevance: it opens the path to the authentic "Self", free from external projections.

In Jung's concept of individuation, the psyche seeks wholeness. For example, the ego must set itself apart from the unconscious part of the psyche, which includes (shadow, anima/animus, archetypal contents) and then step by step it strives to integrate with the self and achieve a psychic totality. Individuation is not only the adaptation of socially desirable traits; however, it requires a confrontation with the shadow (the neglected parts) and achieving mutual wholeness -upon synthesis of opposites—for example, masculine/feminine, conscious/unconscious. For Jung, moral maturation follows psychological work: one becomes a "self" rather than a fragmented ego (Jung C. G., 1961)

Analysis and Discussion

i. Lacanian Reading of Shen Te\Shui Ta

Applying this to Brecht: the division between Shen Te and Shui Ta can be seen not simply as a dramatic or plot-device duality, but as a manifestation of the

split Lacan theorizes: the part of the subject shaped by social demands (ego) vs. the part constituted by necessity (the "Other," alter-ego, shadow self) in response to structural pressures.

This play was written during Brecht's exile in Scandinavia, and tells the story of Shen-Te, a young woman forced into prostitution by poverty, who was generously rewarded by the gods after she opened her home to three gods who are considered her visitors. Shen Te refuted their claim that goodness still existed on Earth, and the gods granted her a small business. From there, she struggled to work honestly and provide for the needs of the needy, earning her the title of "Angel of the Slums" (Azad, 2019)

Having fallen victim to unprincipled neighbours and an unfaithful lover, Shen Te was forced to build an alter ego around her ego; this alter ego is represented by her business man cousin, Mr Shui Ta. Their personalities are completely different from each other, and this main point explains Lacan's ego and alter-ego. While Shen Te was confident, selfless, and naïve (Lacan's ego), Shui Ta was ruthless, manipulative, and efficient (Lacan's alter-ego). In Brecht's *The Good Woman of Szechuan*, Lacan's split can be represented in Shen Te's when she uses dual selves (the generous, spoken self), which is presented to others, while Shui Ta (the stern, rational businessman) is introduced to the society to defend herself and as a mask that negotiates demands, threats, and lack.

"To be good to others and to myself, I must have another name." (Brecht, *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, 1983)

This transformation is created by Shen Te to negotiate societal demands. The forces of capital and history constantly shape the world of Brecht in drama, in his world and in our world. Those forces exhaust in Brecht's drama and Shen-Te, forcing her to relinquish her goodness or starve to death:

"Since not to eat is to die

Who can long refuse to be bad?

As I lay prostrate beneath the weight of good intentions

Ruin stared me in the face

It was when I was unjust that I ate good meat." (Brecht, *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, 1983)

From a Lacanian perspective, the gods in the play are considered the "big Other" (law, language, and supposed meaning). They bestow upon Shen-Te the quality of a "good man," but they do not change the socio-economic structure that generates lack and demand (Lacan J. , 1977) (Fink, 1995)). It is defined as a symbolic acknowledgement that the other (here: the transcendent

moral law) can play a major role in determining Shen Te's survival, but does not guarantee it materially. Thus, Shen Te's generosity generates a series of demands from others (neighbours, claimants), revealing how the social economy transforms symbolic acknowledgement into further demands, which is related to a Lacanian economy of want and lack (Fink, 1995)

To master the real pressures, Shui Ta uses different ways, such as removing squatters, enforcing contracts, and protecting property; however, she did so at the cost of splitting Shen Te's ethical identifications.

Shui Ta: "I must ask you all to leave. This is a tobacco shop, not a home for idlers. My cousin is too soft-hearted; she lets people sleep in every corner, and soon there will be no room for the customers." (Brecht, *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, 1983)

Then,

Shui Ta: "A business cannot be run on good intentions alone. Promises do not pay for tobacco. If you want credit, you must sign a contract and keep to it." (Brecht, *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, 1983)

Lacan's notion of **objet petit a** (the unattainable object-cause of desire) can be exemplified through the lack of Shen Te, since she always feels her goodness cannot be fully fulfilled. "Desire is not a relation to an object, but to a lack." (Lacan J. , 1977). Whatever the gods grant is never satisfactory to close the gap of lack; the demands and desires of any community will always exceed the gift, resulting in new lack and new demand (Lacan, 2006). The play illustrates how symbolic recognition (the blessing of the gods) cannot replace redistribution or structural change; the splitting of the self (Shen Te/Shui Ta) is the psychological result of this social deficiency (Fink, 1995)

"Oh, it is hard to be good when everything is dear. Even giving a cup of water costs money. Yet the gods have told me to be good, to love my fellow men, and to share what I have. But if I do that, I shall soon have nothing left. Who will share with me then?" (Brecht, 1983)

Shen-Te's desire to be good clashes with the symbolic order—the economic and social laws that render her desire impossible. The act of giving only leads to further loss, demonstrating how every attempt to attain the desired ideal only deepens her lack. As Lacan wrote, "Desire is never satisfied by its end, because its end is not real; it is merely a sign of lack" (Lacan J. , 1977)

Shen Te's self-sacrifice reveals this logic: she never ceases to try to fill the void of goodness with her actions, yet every good deed makes her poorer and more desperate. It concerns our fantasies and assumptions about our identity and how

we think others see us. This record is fundamental to understanding concepts such as transference, imagination, and the ego, particularly in Lacan's idea of the formation of the ego through the mirror stage (Lacan J. , 1977)

The symbol \$ (barred S) is used by Lacan to produce a divided self whose division happened due to a series of signifiers; the wholeness is not attained in this stage; rather, the language and social rules split it to be fragmented and alienated (Lacan J. , 1977) The barred S of Lacan, the subject cut off by the chain of signifiers can be applied to explain the creation of Shui Ta by Shen Te: the gods recognize her as a good person but fail to fill in the structural gap created by the social Other, the subject disintegrates and generates Shui Ta as an instrument identity to satisfy the needs which the symbolic recognition itself generates. ((Lacan J. , 1977), p. 4; (Fink, 1995), pp. 49–59; (Azad, Shen Te as an ‘Alter Ego’ of Shui Ta in Brecht’s The Good Woman of Setzuan: An Analysis)).

ii. Jungian Reading of Shen Te\Shui Ta

The combination of Jung and Brecht highlights a regulating prospect: while Lacan gives weight to the alienation as structure, Jung offers a model of psychological movement toward integration. Applied to Shen Te, Jungian individuation aims to reconcile Shen Te and Shui Ta into a single psychological whole—an integrated entity capable of acting with moral usefulness (pursue a pragmatic goal)

However, the possibility of achieving this process is complicated by Brecht's social determinants and political aesthetics. Jungian analysis highlights the stereotypical structures and the process of individuation through which the ego integrates the contents of the unconscious.

Jung's classification offers different, though complementary, terms for the division between Shen Te and Shui Ta. Shen Te's general image—her kindness and her role as a good woman. It resembles Jung's character: the socially acceptable mask that the ego presents to the world. In contrast, Shui Ta can be read as an embodiment of the Shadow and/or the Anime. The Shadow contains the aggressive and pragmatic motives in disguise necessary for survival, while the Anime (the unconscious masculinity of the woman) can enable the female self within a patriarchal socio-economic system (Jung, 1959); (Stevens, 1994). Shen Te expresses the impossibility of integrating her persona (the socially “good” self) with her shadow (the repressed self that requests self-defence and power). This shows the awareness of Shen Te, whose consciousness becomes aware of the shadow, and this represents the beginning of individuation.

According to Jung, individuation requires a conscious confrontation with the Shadow to unify repressed impulses with the Persona (Jung, 1959).

Shen Te embodies Jung's concept of Persona — the socially acceptable mask — while Shui Ta appears as the Shadow/Animus, the repressed but necessary counterpart required for survival in a capitalist world (Jung, 1959; (Stevens, 1994). It demonstrates an inability to integrate the Persona and the Shadow, indicating that the process of individuation remains unfinished (Brecht, 1983); (Jung, 1959).

Shen Te's split identity closely reflects Jung's theory of individuation. According to Jung, psychological development depends on bringing the shadow—the repressed of the self—into conscious awareness in order to achieve inner unity (Jung, 1959). Shen Te, however, suppresses her forceful and self-protective tendencies, expressing them only through her alter ego, Shui Ta, who operates as a manifestation of the Shadow or Animus.

Her admission, “To be good to others and to myself at the same time, I cannot do it” (Brecht, 1983)

It signals her awareness of the tension between Persona and Shadow and suggests an initial step toward individuation. Yet Brecht ultimately withholds any resolution of this conflict, dramatising what Jung describes as the effects of failing to confront the shadow, a failure that results in a fractured ego (Jung C. G., 1961) . Shen Te's suffering, therefore, is not merely social but also psycho-spiritual, as the harsh material conditions of her world prevent the completion of individuation.

Frequent switching prevents true integration and keeps Shen-Ti divided, producing internal conflict and social misunderstanding (Jung, 1959). Stevens, 1994). Jungian critics point out that until the protagonist confronts and morally and consciously assimilates the Shadow/Spirit elements, psychological wholeness (and perhaps social reconciliation) remains unattainable.

Stage Direction: “She takes off her dress and puts on the suit of Shui Ta.” (Brecht, 1983)

The manifestation of the shadow is emphasised here, and the announcement of the birth of the shadow. It clarifies that she needs her counterpart to survive. From Jung's perspective, Shin Te's creation of Shui Ta is not merely a deception, but a psychological split that delays individuation. To achieve individuation, the conscious should confront the shadow, and then the opposites are reconciled indeed, the play embodies the rejected functions in a mask that the protagonist both operates and conceals. From a Jungian perspective, the

three deities can be read as archetypal figures, and they are regarded as self-expressions of moral principles that claim recognition but remain detached from the essential psychological work required for individuality.

The inability to rearrange the social field reflects the problem of stereotyping: stereotypical insight alone does not affect material change unless it is activated by unique individuals who have integrated their unconscious tensions (Jung C. G., 1961). Ms Shen and the other city dwellers serve as projections of collective complexes and shadow elements: they embody the negative aspects of their society, such as greed, materialism and hypocrisy. Those aspects should be acknowledged socially and psychologically to proceed with the individuation.

Though Shen Te represents the idealism, and Shui Ta embodies pragmatism, individualism requires confronting and integrating both sides, especially the shadow (qualities rejected by the ego). To treat Shen Te psychologically, ShuTi should acknowledge Shui Ta not only as a deceitful person, but he also represents the unconscious part of the psyche, which has destructive force whose energy, if integrated, can serve a conscious life. Integration involves a moral reassessment, transforming the harsh energies of Shui Ta into functional boundaries and frameworks rather than allowing them to dominate. Jung's texts emphasise that the goal is not to eliminate opposites but to bring them together in a way that organises the ego.

Shui Ta (as Shen Te):

“I'd like to be good, it's true, but there's the rent to pay. And that's not all: I sell myself for a living. Even so, I can't make ends meet; there's too much competition. I'd like to honour my father and mother and speak nothing but the truth and not covet my neighbour's house. I should love to stay with one man. But how? How is it done? Even breaking a few of your commandments, I can hardly manage.” (Brecht, *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, 1983)

Shen Te acknowledges the necessity of hardness. To achieve wholeness, an acceptance of traits should not be rejected. Jung describes individuation as a union of opposites: only by acknowledging the compassionate and cruel sides can the being approach perfection. The gods represent the superego, which suppresses the shadow. Shen Te's rejection of the gods represents a moment of

singularity in which a confrontation with external ideals that deny inner truth occurs. Shen Te should break away from societal expectations to attain authenticity.

On the other hand, Jungian individuation supposes a psychological environment capable of supporting introspection (reflective time, security, and relationships that allow for introspection). Brecht's social critique insists that under capitalist pressures and collective dependency, the psychological resources necessary for introspection may be scarce: Shin-Ti's actions are mostly reactive and socially controlled. Shen Te realises that even integration is difficult in her society. For Jung, individuation is not merely a balance, but a constant tension between conscious and unconscious forces. Shen Te's plea points to an incomplete individuation, a tragic consciousness without resolution.

Brecht leaves the process of individuation incomplete—the gods' satisfaction contrasts with Shen Te's internal disintegration. From Jung's perspective, this end highlights the difficulty of achieving individuation in a world that imposes rigid dichotomies between good and evil. Thus, while Jung's model offers a promising ethical horizon, Brecht's play raises the question of whether individualism is possible at the individual level or whether it requires structural social change.

iii. Lacan's Split Subject and Alter Ego and Jung's Individuation

The Self in the Jungian theory is unified, it is beyond the ego and represents individuation's purpose (Jung C. G., 1961). The ego must confront and integrate the Shadow (repressed aspects of personality) and other unconscious elements. Where Lacan sees the ego as a misrecognition, Jung views it as a necessary but partial centre of consciousness that must expand. To Jung: the psyche is archetypal, division is ontological, not developmental, wholeness can be achieved. And the Self is teleological (goal-oriented). The first gap is in the ontology: the lack is constitutive in Lacan. In this place, the subject is forbidden (\$) as it is doomed to be permanently estranged once it becomes a part of language (Lacan J. , 1977). Conversely, fragmentation by Jung is an intermediate stage of psychic development. The unconscious supplements the consciousness and can be incorporated (Jung C. G., 1961). Therefore, the Lacan model is a structural and anti-humanist model, whereas the Jung version is a humanistic and teleological model. In terms of the alter ego and the shadow, the alter ego (mirror image) of Lacan exists as an external and imaginary being, which is produced by misrecognition. It is wedded to egotism and competition. Jung's the Shadow, in its turn, is a repression of the personality.

Confronting the Shadow is necessary for individuation (Jung C. G., 1961). Unlike Lacan's imaginary unity, Jung's integration involves ethical responsibility toward one's unconscious material. Despite their differences, the most important similarities are that they both deny the unified self, stress the importance of the unconscious as the basic, and they view identity as the result of relationship processes. Nevertheless, Lacan is a radicalisation of division; Jung lives in reconciliation.

iv. Political Limits of Individuation in Brecht

The combination of Lacan and Jung enriches the narrative of the play's psychopolitical drama. Lacan explains why symbolic recognition of Shen Te (the gods' blessing) cannot replace poverty, and why individuals are divided by the pressure of the Other and by desire. There are two key Lacanian points for reading Brecht's play. First, the oscillation of Shen Te and the emergence of Shui Ta can be read as an imaginary response: Shen Te constitutes an image (a man's identity with authority) that ensures social value when its "natural" value fails. Second, the emergence of Shui Ta points to how the ego resorts to alternative selves in the face of the law/the other.

The ego disintegrates into an alternative face capable of fulfilling those demands without corrupting Shen Te's "good" image, especially when the social (symbolic) economy demands a harsh act. Thus, Lacanian analysis highlights the dynamics of misjudgment and alienation in the play. Thus, Lacanian analysis highlights the dynamics of misjudgment and alienation in the play.

Jung presents the paradigmatic and internal dynamics that interpret Shen-Te's duplication as a failure of integration between persona and shadow/animus, and the structure of the unresolved resolution as a failure of individuation.

Lacan and Jung point to Brecht's view: moral training without structural reform leaves individuals divided and societies unjust; similarly, psychological integration without social transformation may leave the individual morally powerless in the face of systemic exploitation.

In *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, the split between Shen Te and her alter ego, Shui Ta, can be read as a site where Lacan's concept of the divided subject intersects with Jung's idea of individuation. The difference between the Lacanian fragmentation and the Jungian promise of wholeness is revealed. So, the play by Brecht can be interpreted as a transition between concepts, as Lacan reveals the need to be divided, and Jung refers to the desirable but impossible synthesis of the states of oppression in the social environment.

The alienation effect used by Brecht in *The Good Woman of Setzuan* does not allow the audience to relate to the sufferings of Shen Te but rather makes the audience aware of the social formations that result in her fragmentation. Different methods like direct address, episodic format, the use of songs, and the unresolved conclusion make the viewers remember that they are viewing a constructed reality and not a natural one, e.g. opening prologue and the final epilogue disrupt narrative immersion and encourage spectators to evaluate the world that drives Shen Te into her dualistic identity (Brecht, *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, 1983). Instead of letting the audience passively empathise with her goodness, Brecht alienates them to enable them interpret the reasons why morality falls apart in capitalism and why the creation of Shui Ta is essential to survival. In this regard, alienation turns the personal tragedy of Shen Te into a political issue instead of a psychological one, which is what Brecht thought theatre should make people catharsis instead of social criticism (Brecht, 1964).

The use of songs is the most intentional alienation technique by Brecht, who breaks the emotional flow of the drama and makes the audience think, to ask him to think, but not to feel. The songs do not support the mood but comment on the action or summarise themes or reveal contradictions in the social world, making the spectators thinkers, as opposed to emotional consumers. An example is *the Song of the Eighth Elephant*, about how one could not live with virtue in an economically challenging world, and such issues made the suffering of Shen Te clearer and explained how that was not the moral issue, but the structural one (Brecht, *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, 1983). With these musical disruptions, Brecht refutes the illusion of realism and focuses on the machinery of exploitation and the forces of social pressures that shatter identity. Songs make the play a pedagogical area where the political meaning comes out, but not through the plot, but through the intellectual participation of the audience in commenting on it (Brecht, 1964).

Brecht is systematically breaking the fourth wall, and this directly destroys the illusion of theatre and reminds the audience that it is not observing the natural world, but a form of construction. The characters are talking to the audience directly, describing the events, posing questions, or revealing the means of action, all of which do not leave room to be engrossed in the psychology. This can be seen most visibly in the epilogue when the actors explicitly state that the conclusion is not a solution and request the audience to provide one as the actors pass the burden of justice outside of the stage: Find us a better ending (Brecht, *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, 1983). This kind of direct address does

not allow closure, and does not place the spectator as a passive receiver of meaning, but as an active participant who needs to question the social world that gave rise to Shen Te/Shui Ta. The fourth-wall break is thus revolutionary - it makes theatre a political enclosure, which is also in line with the belief of Brecht that drama must educate people on the way to think and not on how to feel (Brecht, 1964).

In terms of performance, Brecht's epic distances the spectators from being attached to the events of the play, and they can see social interconnection. This complements the Lacanian view of alienation: the audience sees Shen Te's errors and the systemic processes that constitute them (Azad, 2019). The individuation of Jung is a model for how the transformed individuation works and looks, but Brecht's politics insist that the scope of transformation cannot be purely internal.

2. Conclusion

Brecht's play "Shen Te/Shui Ta" is a perfect modern dramatic model of a split individual. Lacan hypothesises the structural formation of this split, the ego is represented as a misperceived image (mirror stage), and how the alter ego is created under symbolic pressure. Jung presents the process of individuation as a moral and psychological production of opposites. The combination of the two explains the cause of Shen Te's inner conflict and the psychological work required to resolve it; however, Brecht's political perspective raises the question of the possibility of individual fulfilment under precarious economic conditions. Brecht positions the protagonist at the intersection of two psychological models: Lacan's structural fragmentation, which mirrors the alienation of the modern subject, and Jung's potential for integration, which remains unrealised under material oppression. The play ultimately suggests that personal unification is not an inner journey but a social impossibility in a world that forces goodness and survival into mutually exclusive roles. Identity fractures, wholeness remains deferred, and the gods depart — leaving the audience to question not the individual's failure, but the world that makes integration impossible.

References

1. Almaarroof, H. a. (2025). *A Lacanian Reading of Violence–Desire and the Body in Sarah Kane’s Cleansed and Will Arbery’s Heroes of the Fourth Turning*. .
2. Azad. (2019). Shen Te as an ‘Alter Ego’ of Shui Ta in Brecht’s The Good Woman of Setzuan: An Analysis . (*American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)*, 2.
3. Brecht. (1964). *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Hill and Wang.
4. Brecht. (1983). *The Good Woman of Setzuan*.
5. Fink. (1995). *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*.
6. Jung. (1959). *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Princeton University Press.
7. Jung, C. G. (1961). *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* . (A. Jaffé, Ed.; R. Winston & C. Winston, Trans.). Pantheon Books.
8. Lacan. (2006). *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* . The First Complete Edition in English (B. Fink, Trans.). W. W. Norton.
9. Lacan, J. (1977). *Écrits: A Selection*.
10. Lehmann. (2016). *Brecht Lesen*. Theater der Zeit.
11. Stevens. (1994). *Jung: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
12. Thomson, P. &. ((1994)). *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*. Cambridge University Press.
13. Willett, J. ((1964).). *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. . Hill and Wang.