

Mobilization of the Individual Proletarian and the Collective Proletariat in the Poems of Vladimir Mayakovsky and Bertolt Brecht

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Summary

In this thesis, the political poetry of Vladimir Mayakovsky and Bertolt Brecht, inspired by the October Revolution in 1917, is compared with respect to their tactics of mobilization of their audience. The employed rhetorical and aesthetical mechanisms are analyzed, as well as the relation of the individual (artist) to the collective.

The first part of the analysis is aimed at discovering more about the characterization of the ‘masses’ themselves; how they are conceived, constructed, and limited. Mayakovsky’s goal is to break from the past and to leap towards the Utopic future. Brecht’s desire is to encourage the masses, more specifically the oppressed, to break from the existing chronology that has been imposed on them, and to create their own narrative. Correspondingly, the analysis shows the differences in their modes of rhetorically constructing their imagined audiences. Mayakovsky’s fierce and resolute beliefs are mirrored in his poetry. He appeals to raw emotion, using themes of violence, strength, and the militaristic through his use of extensive metaphors and attribution of mysticism to people and phenomena alike. Brecht’s rhetoric, on the other hand, is generally sharp and clear, invoking colloquiality, familiarity, and reflection amongst his audience.

While aesthetically distinct, the artists find common ground in their ideological attitudes, interweaving their communist ideals in their creation of a new collective entity. The relation of the individual to their collective differs, too. Mayakovsky advocates for the complete submersion of the individual within the collective – characterized as the highest abstraction. Brecht however advocates for lesser deindividuation, emphasizing instead a unity of mind and motion – and not of body or identity – where the position of the individual is maintained through the opportunity to self-reflect. Brecht ensures this participation of his audience by consciously providing a distinctive role for the reader throughout his poetry.

While one cannot speak of the success-rate or the level of effect a mobilization technique can have on an audience, one can speak about the match between the employed technique and its interpellation on the one hand and the capabilities attributed to the imagined reader on the other. As Bertolt Brecht actively ensures the participation of his audience, he has greater faith in his audience's capabilities. His implied reader/ideal recipient is one endowed with a mind like Brecht's own, and because Brecht allows room for the individual to recognize himself within the poems, the individual entity and his or her capabilities are preserved. This in contrast with Mayakovsky, where the individual becomes submerged in the abstract collective. Brecht in turn allows ascriptions of individual responsibility that compliment collective responsibility, leading to greater expectations but also greater opportunities for the individual – and not just the collective – to realize Brecht's desire to rewrite history.

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Introduction: Power of Art

Two artists that are masters of mobilization are Vladimir Mayakovsky and Bertolt Brecht. They both saw the inescapable connection between the aesthetical and the political and manifested this in a new, innovative form. Vladimir Mayakovsky, as an appointed member of Russian Cubo-Futurism, advocated a rejection of the past and posed art as a struggle for the new. This “Spiritual Revolution” of art was supposed to install in the people the duty to create a new proletarian culture, to motivate them to struggle for the new future together with the artist (Mayakovsky 135). Bertolt Brecht was not as closely associated with a literary movement as Mayakovsky was and instead excelled in his ‘epic theatre’. Through his engaging art, the audience “were to be led back into the real world with their senses alert” to strive for social change and to thus diminish inequality and other injustices in the world (Patterson 159).

Their perspectives on how art can be instrumental in achieving social change results in artistical as well as ideological like-mindedness. Mayakovsky and Brecht understand the importance of art in political struggle, as well as the necessary existence of ideology within aesthetics. Their audience is the vehicle of social change and reform, and, following this Communist tenet, the power of art must thus be aimed at these ‘masses’. Examining the artists’ expectations, characterizations, and understanding of the masses provides insight into how they believed art could interpellate and persuade audiences. The position of the individual (artist) within the collective furthermore raises questions on the assumption of artistic, individual, and collective responsibility.

This plethora of questions and possibilities leads me to the following research question: *How do the characterizations of the Communist proletarian masses in the poems of Bertolt Brecht and Vladimir Mayakovsky reflect their perspectives on the role of the individual and the collective in assuming responsibility towards social change?* I will answer this question by first analyzing the aesthetical and rhetorical choices that

are employed by Mayakovsky and Brecht to characterize and mobilize the masses. After having a clear image of the masses, I will analyze how the artists differ in their understanding of the relation between the individual and the collective.

The conclusion of this research serves to generate more insight in the catalyst power of art, and the different opportunities in which such art can be employed. It aims to showcase and provide further understanding in the interpellative force of art, and the strength of the artist as a constructor and orchestrator of current realities and future narratives. Regarding the power of art, it could be said that both Mayakovsky and Brecht have succeeded in developing new innovative methods to testify to their vision of poetry as an instrument for social change. While one cannot 'measure' the level of mobilizing-success, one can analyze the match between their manner of mobilization and their (imagined) readers' capabilities. As Bertolt Brecht provides his audience with an active role throughout his poetry, he assumes a reader that is endowed with greater capabilities. Thus, his manner of interpellation generates a greater amount of recognition amongst his audience, resulting in greater awareness of their inherent power in the struggle for social change. Despite the artists' disparate perspectives on mobilization and the place of the individual within the collective, their attribution of importance to the masses in general and their conception of art as a "battle-cry" towards the future serves as a reminder to continue to be inspired by the power of art.

Theoretical Framework: Didactic Art, Interpellation, and Deindividuation

Poetry, for Mayakovsky and Brecht, is the voice and narrator of life and thereby impossible to separate from political reality. Their art is characterized by the fact that “the content (‘subject’)” is almost “impossible to isolate from the form” as both are “determined by the social environment” (Bukharin 106). Carrying this idea of Nikolai Bukharin to the present, art can, according to David Roberts, not only enrich but also construct a culture, a consciousness, and a human being (208). This constructive ability of art is crucial within the understanding of both Mayakovsky and Brecht when analyzing the mobilizing force of their poetry.

Didactic Art: Mayakovsky and Brecht within Ideology

Mayakovsky and Brecht work not only from an aesthetic but also ideological like-mindedness, their conception of the masses as the harbinger of social change is fundamental in their advocacy for the construction of a new society. This constructive power of art when combined with the Communist ideological perspective materializes in Mayakovsky’s poetry in his desire to construct a new culture for the proletariat. In line with his advocated Spiritual Revolution, he believed that art should, most importantly, be available to all and should first and foremost be connected to the ‘masses’ (Mayakovsky, “Manifesto” 135). He himself was an “active revolutionary before 1917” and after the October Revolution became a central figure in the “new state’s propaganda initiatives” (Kelly 559). However, when his ideal of artistic production without State restrictions clashed with Stalin’s conception on the use of art, he started to believe that his artistic capabilities could not flourish in the Soviet Union (Magill 1704-5). While Mayakovsky was criticized while alive, after his death his work became framed by Stalin to fit the regime. This led to the fact that the writer only later became reappreciated by critics and people alike (McGavran x-xi, xv).

Brecht's ideological connections were more ambiguous. Although never an official member of any Communist Party (Berg-Pan 84), he turned to Marxism to make sense of politics, economics, and culture framed by a capitalist society (Glahn 96). Within this Marxist analysis of society, he was preoccupied with questions of ownership, questions of "who determines the terms of experience, for whom, and who changes them" (Glahn 93). Further on in his life, he became disillusioned with Communism after hearing of Stalin's crimes, while he personally lived in a diluted version of communism in East Germany (Kuhn xiv). Flowing from this continued critical stance on society, he desired a complete turnaround of his audience and to raise their awareness (Roberts 179). This awareness was mainly pursued through the *Verfremdungseffekt*, whose purpose was to make the audience question what has become ordinary (Silcox 132), and to "examine the individual's relationship to his environment with a view to changing both" (Patterson 151).

Consequently, both writers were heavily influenced by Communist ideology and consciously chose to work from ideology within their didactic art. There are two concepts that fit with this wielding of ideology and which require a brief introduction before moving forward to the subsequent analysis. These concepts, that can be attributed to respectively part I and part II of the analysis, are *interpellation* and *deindividuation*.

Interpellation: the Individual's 'subject' and the Artist's 'Subject'

Ideology, according to Louis Althusser, has the power to interpellate individuals; to hail an individual and for them to recognize that "it was them to whom the hail was addressed". This hailing is what allows us to recognize our identity as members of and within a certain collective and corresponding ideology, and to transform into concrete subjects (Althusser 104, Rehmann 156). Mayakovsky and Brecht use the constructing power of art combined with the interpellative force of didactic writing to constitute these subjects. Normally, these subjects would be subjected

under the State: the preexisting ‘Subject’ whose ideology can interpellate all other individuals (Althusser 107). However, in this case, the subjects will be subjected to the Subject of either Mayakovsky or Brecht since they now constitute and provide the authority of ideology. Jan Rehmann elaborates on Althusser’s “imaginary relationships”, stating that they are “mediated through unifying images, which are archetypically anchored ... [and] constitute homogenized identities” (164). Mayakovsky and Brecht provide these images and identities in favor of the construction of a collective. How they employ their aesthetical and rhetorical devices to construct and anticipate their ideal interpellated subject will subsequently be analyzed.

Deindividuation: the Individual within the Collective?

In attributing importance to the general audience and the addressed masses, questions on the constellation of the collective also arise. Larry May explains that what constitutes a group, or a ‘mass’, is whether its structure can facilitate “joint action or common interest” (29-30). Mayakovsky and Brecht aim to, after successful interpellation, appeal to their audience *en masse* to install this common interest. Some ‘deindividuation’ can result from the construction of homogenized identity and common interest, a phenomenon which Felipe Vilanova et al. describe as a process “in which individuals act in groups and do not see themselves as individuals” (2). Individual identity fades in favor of a single collective being with one mental unity. They furthermore state that “every crowd has a conductor ... around which the opinion of the crowd is formed and identified” (3). While they regard the phenomenon from a sociological perspective with the image of a “despotic” leader, deindividuation also provides a fruitful concept to address the artist’s constitution and mobilization of a collective purpose within the masses.

Part I: Mobilization – Emoted Participant versus Confident Individual

Before analyzing how the audience is mobilized, it must be understood how they are characterized and, as discussed, interpellated to become ‘the masses’. I will first analyze the spatial and temporal limits that are ascribed to the addressed audience so that more can be made clear about its composition. Furthermore, by regarding these boundaries, the envisaged goal of both artists in addressing the masses becomes clear. We can combine the characterization with this envisaged goal to then make sense of the actual aesthetic and rhetoric choices that are employed to achieve the desired mobilization. The poems that I have chosen to analyze all range from 1917 to 1937 and some Communist thought is consequently to be found in all of them. For Mayakovsky, these poems are: “At the Top of My Voice” (1929-30), “Lines on a Soviet Passport” (1929), “Ode to the Revolution” (1918), “An Order to the Army of Art” (1918), and “Our March” (1917). For Brecht – written somewhat later than those of Mayakovsky – these are: “The Great October” (1937), “None or All” (1934), “Solidarity Song” (1931), “Song of the United Front” (1934), and “To Karl” (1927).

Mayakovsky’s “True Communist” and Utopic future

Mayakovsky’s poems appear to aim to mobilize the masses by encouraging them to participate in the Revolution to achieve the social change that will bring forth a Utopic future. While Mayakovsky appeals to the present audience, he employs his art to establish a rupture with the past and battle-cry towards the future (Lawton 18). This division of past, present, and future is evident in this line from “Order”: “The only true communist is he / who’s burnt every bridge leading back. / Enough of this marching, Futurists -- / it’s time for a leap into the future!”. From this line it is furthermore evident that the temporal separation is also morally tainted. The future is seen as the Utopia that is to be reached, while “bridges” with the past should be forgotten and

“burnt”. In “Our March”, the line “Rainbow, lend your arched shaft-bows / to the swift horses of years” references the Utopic future by employing the trope of the rainbow, which “symbolized peace ... the happiness of the world” (Kutik 195). This duality of temporal morality leads to an all-encompassing conflict; a clash of past and potential future, with the present as battle-ground (R. Thomson 182).

Manipulating Emotion: Powerful Sound and Military Themes

Subsequent mobilization throughout the poems mainly occurs through a manipulation of emotion. The first, and perhaps most noticeable manner, in which emotions are showcased is by a conscious use of themes that exude power. Simple sound is molded into an entity of force, for example in “Order”: “Pile sound upon sound / and move forward, / singing and whistling”. The line continues with “There are still some good letters left: / R, / *Sha*, / *Shcha*”, where sound is valued, not just in the form of coherent words, but as isolated “letters”. This can be traced back to the custom of the Cubo-Futurists who conceived words as a “phonetic entity” and a “living organism” (Lawton 13-4). This conception of sound as self-sufficient “entity” leads to the understanding of sounds as coherent weapons, of which a direct equation, “Our weapon – our songs”, is found in “Our March”.

This interpretation of power – through sound – is also connected to the use of themes that embody strength, military themes being the most important (McGavran xvii). These military themes can be seen in “Our March”, “Our breast is the copper of kettledrums”, as well as in “Order”, “Comrades! / To the barricades! - / the barricades of hearts and souls”. This use of the military can be interpreted as a glorification of violence, but this cruel depiction of the Revolution, the “object of glorification” (Kutik 181), serves to prove to the audience the important qualities of the strong and the epic (185). This glorious depiction of the Revolution is further enhanced by endowing it with certain mystical qualities, as will now be discussed.

Manipulating Emotion: Metaphors and Mysticism

Emotions are presented by Mayakovsky being more than just powerful. Mayakovsky's use of language, especially his extensive use of exaggerated metaphors, affords "agency to the emotion rather than to the human subject" (Doak 144). In these metaphors, the 'tenor', the thing actually described, is emphasized more than the 'vehicle', the thing to what it is compared to (Wachtel 45). A prime example is this paragraph from "Passport": "red-skinned giant of a passport. // He holds it / like a bomb / or a porcupine, // or like a double-edged / razor blade; // he holds it / like / a twenty-fanged // snake / of six-foot size". The comparisons that are made overpower the "passport", thus attributing greater force to its negative emotional connotations than to the material object itself.

This exaggeration of metaphors is also employed in Mayakovsky's depiction of the Revolution as such. The "object of glorification", the Revolution, is attributed mythical and epic qualities, and the people who participate in it are ascribed this, too. In "Ode", the Revolution is given grand mystical qualities through blessings by the poet in the line "Oh be four times glorified, Blessed One!". This mysticism does not just serve to overpower, but also to endear the readers, to further the familiar bond. This balance of strength and familiarity is achieved by Mayakovsky through attributing, not just epic, but anthropomorphic qualities to the Revolution. This line in "Ode", "O Beastly! / O Childish! / O Halfpenny! / O Great One!" shows the alternating attributing of either mystic or anthropomorphic qualities. The direct juxtaposition of the mystic "Beastly!" and "Great One!" with the anthropomorphic "Childish!" and "Halfpenny!" portrays the Revolution as an all-encompassing entity.

Brecht's Appeal to the Oppressed and his Invitation to Participate

Bertolt Brecht believed that “art divorced from social reality will deplete itself”, and that poetry thus was a “social practice” (Rippey 53). Seeing that proletariat’s narrative of ownership was suppressed by narratives of capitalists, Brecht’s goal was to show the oppressed that they were capable of (re)writing their history. Brecht’s longing for the creation of a new narrative leads him to work from objective and present reality (Klotz 145). In contrast with Mayakovsky, Brecht’s focus is on the present, with indifference towards distinctions of past and future (Rippey 40). Presently, it is the “people themselves (the lower classes) [which] can pull themselves out of their misery” (Klotz 133), without yielding to the “higher worries concerning a future eternity” (Arendt 309), as seen in “None or All”: “The hungry will feed those who hunger. / ... / And act today, throw off your fate / For tomorrow will be too late”. Brecht’s use of time and space, combined with rhetorical devices, results in the opportunity and invitation of audience participation. Thus, Brecht uses reason as a poetic tool (Klotz 13) and desires to motivate his audience in such a way that they became aware of the meaning of “their task in the world” (Arendt 307).

Manipulating Reason: Telling

Brecht provides clear, understandable, and concise information that tells a story with direct, brief, and accessible language (Klotz 137). His sentences display a “controlled use of energy” and an “exactness of image and denotation” (Klotz 127). This focus on the objective leads to a certain “sharpness of statement” (Hays 153), and a direct engagement with the reader (Klotz 127, 132, P. Thomson 226). The line “And because all folk are human / They don’t like being kicked in the face” in “United Front” shows this exact sharpness of statement through a short sentence and with clear language.

Brecht employs rhetoric which resembles colloquial language: common language of the ordinary people (Klotz 131). In “To Karl”, a whole paragraph that uses polysyndeton, “the repetition of a conjunction, ‘and’” (Wachtel 47), serves as another way to emphasize orality and colloquiality: “One day we’ll go forward / *And* never back again / *And* what’s theirs we’ll fling down / *And* build with the iron we own / *And* the coal will warm our homes / *And* then *and* only then”. The use of the polysyndeton within poetry evokes a feeling of familiarity and intimacy (Rippey 39), a reminder of how an ordinary person would normally tell a clear story to an acquaintance.

Manipulating Reason: Gaining the Audience’s Attention

As said, Brecht employs his technique of alienation primarily to gain the audience’s attention, to make sure they are “baffled ... into spontaneous attention” (Klotz 138). For example, the technique of questioning features often throughout his poems (Kuhn xi, Hutchinson 48), evident in “None or All”, where the first line of each stanza starts with a question: “Slave, who will set you free? // Who will feed you, you who hunger? // Who will avenge you for the beatings? // You who are wretched, who will dare?”. These questions aim to place a sense of responsibility within the “wretched”, as only they can make a change.

There are also some alienation techniques that aim to “generate surprise and curiosity” (Patterson 160). Brecht frequently plays with the poetic possibilities of the formation of lines, where the end of a poetic line does not signify a stop in the search for meaning, instead it motivates us to explore further (Hutchinson 46). In “October”, Brecht’s breaking of sentences in the following line “... who even / Envy those others: they all / Know this, there is / An October” leads to a more mindful search for the subject and the object within what is described.

Manipulating Reason: Provoking and Acting

As said, just gaining the attention of your audience is not enough. The audience needs to be provoked in such a way that it elicits a response and encourages them to act (Hutchinson 40). The alienation technique assumes that the reader “wants to supply the ideas that the poet has suppressed”, thus creating the “reader’s participation in the process of reasoning” (Hutchinson 33). This optimism in the willingness to participate is tied to Brecht’s belief in the prevalence of the good in humankind (Klotz 130). This belief is in turn connected to the use of words that are “filled with a sense of kinship of all peoples” (Hays 149). For example, in “To Karl”, Brecht states that “We know we belong together / Each my *comrade*, each my *brother* / Them and me!”, indicating kinship and a direct relation by using “we” combined with appeals to “comrade” and “brother”. This eliciting of intimacy and humanity shows Brecht’s faith in the proletariat itself and this trust serves in turn to install faith in individuals that are mobilized.

Concluding Remarks: Emoted Participant versus Confident Individual

Mayakovsky, through his combination of vigorous, hyperbolic, and powerful imagery aims to fuel the audience to become more than just spectators. He desires the leap towards the future, using the present as a tool to mold his envisaged future, whereas Brecht’s voice exists in the present with disregard for distinctions between both past and future. Their manner of persuasion to participate differ. While Mayakovsky uses grand metaphors to pass on “his sense of indignation to his readers and force them to participate” (R. Thomson 186), Brecht provides the reader with a role in the poetic process so that they are able to “participate in and even influence reality” (Klotz 149). This corresponds with Brecht’s goal, where he desires to make the oppressed aware of their power in reshaping objective reality. Where Mayakovsky promises a better future through ascribing mystic qualities to the individuals, Brecht aims to install confidence in the intellect of his readers and in their ability to self-reflect.

Part II: The Proletarian in the Proletariat - the Individual in the Collective

It presently becomes important to understand how both the individual members as well as the artists are related to the constructed collective. As this collective is a completely new entity, it is created from the connections and relations of multiple individuals. This entails that the creation of a collective should not be regarded as a situation, but rather as an action (Melucci 51). The collective will have a new general structure and a new capacity for action that allows members “to perform actions they could not have performed on their own”, thus justifying and even requiring a non-individualistic analysis (May 23, 26).

Deindividuation of the Individuals within the Collective – Mayakovsky

Vladimir Mayakovsky advocates for deindividuation in favor of the construction of a new coherent entity, in which the individual will completely be submerged. He here builds on Futurism, which employs art to fashion a new man (Roberts 222), and a new collective where the complete individual – not just the economic or political – will be submerged in (Lewis 51). Each individual is immersed in the proletariat, characterized as the most abstract unit of organized collectivity, solidarity, and mass movement (Roberts 220, Lewis 51). Correspondingly, Mayakovsky advocates for the “total sacrifice of the self” in the Revolution (Roberts 179). In “My Voice”, Mayakovsky states that “The verses stand at attention, / heavy as lead, // ready for death / and for glory immortal”, a testify to the sacrifice for the end-goal as well as the deindividuation that is coupled with it.

This submerging of the individual can also be found in Mayakovsky’s use of metaphors, transforming “the collective image into a metaphor and then into its realization” (Kutik 201). One other aesthetical trope used by Mayakovsky to transcend individual identity is the synecdoche, “the substitution of a part for the whole” (Wachtel 46). In “Our March”, Mayakovsky orders “Raise

higher the bank of proud heads!”), a synecdoche that makes it impossible to distinguish actual individuals (Doak 144). Another synecdoche is employed in “Passport”, where he demands to “Send every / piece of paper / straight to hell // along with its mother”, where consequently the synecdoche ‘paper’ instead of complete ‘passport’ is employed to not only overpower but also destroy national identity.

Deindividuation of the Individuals within the Collective – Brecht

Bertolt Brecht focuses more on the merging of the individual and the group, even within the process of deindividuation, while still providing space for the individual to continue to be self-reflective. This merging serves also to underline Brecht’s emphasis on general humanity, resulting in “human sacrifice raised now to the level of acquiescence in self-sacrifice” (Roberts 180). This appreciation of humanity is evident by Brecht’s use of the word *Mensch* to generalize the otherwise specific subject (Sonnenfeld 136). This can be found in “United Front”, where he equates ‘human’ to ‘worker’: “Because all folk are human / ... / Comrade, there’s a place for you / ... / For you’re a worker too.”

The merging of individuals is also emphasized by anonymity, as Brecht “renounces individualization” (Klotz 134), combined with concepts that indicate similarity of motion. In “None or All”, the “Slave”, the “hungry”, and the maltreated are used to emphasize social conditions more than the specific individuals’ condition. The unity of motion can be seen in “United Front” though the militarily tinted “By the left, two three!, By the left, two, three!”, and the unity of mind can be found in Brecht’s songs. This format is chosen to make his message more accessible and more intimate (Hays 152).

As said, the individual is still encouraged to self-reflect within the structure and actions of the collective through Brecht's alienation techniques. Through their self-reflection, the individual can "recognize the effects of its actions and attribute these effects to itself" and can in this manner construct a more coherent collective that compliments the individual (Melucci 46). This can be done through questioning, as discussed, but also through a creation of mysteries that create allusion and force reflection and understanding as in "October": "There are dances and games. *Joyfully* / They pass by, many processions side by side, *joyfully* / But to all oppressors / *A warning*". The mystery that forces reflection comes about through the juxtaposition of joy and threat, highlighted by the fact both positioned at the end of each line.

Deindividuation of the Artist – Mayakovsky: External to the Collective

Whether the artist, in their mobilization, exists internally or externally from the collective that they construct is important in the audience's understanding of the composition of the collective that they are persuaded to take part in. Mayakovsky is external to the collective. He seems to encompass everything – including the complete collective – but thus has no consequent place or meaning within his tangible audience. The only deindividuation that develops within him is not in favor of the collective, but in favor of his artistic development as a God with total power (qtd. in Roberts 222-3).

Leon Trotsky saw in the Futurists a "radical ... messianic intelligentsia ... a counterelite in waiting" (Roberts 209-10). While his criticism of Mayakovsky's poetry thus flows from obvious ideological interests, the exact combination and relevance of ideological criticism and artistic expression makes it worthwhile to be discussed in this analysis of didactic poetry. This messianic interpretation of Mayakovsky, the artist as placed above the world and his audience, can be seen in "My Voice", where Mayakovsky states "I'll come to you / in the far communist future, // but not / like some Yeseninized folk-hero crooner. // My verse will reach you / over the crests of

ages // and over the heads / of poets and states". Here, Mayakovsky places himself "over the heads" of all others, and one who imagines themselves assuming Mayakovsky's position as a "hero" are ridiculed.

This messianic ideal ties in with Trotsky's other criticism, stating that "our poet is a Mayakomorphist and fills ... the Revolution with his own personality. ... At every step Mayakovsky speaks about himself." (149-50). This "desire of the 'I' to encompass everything" (Christian 523) is also evident in "My Voice", where Mayakovsky's "I" is used to recount the whole of the Revolution and time: "I'll tell the story / of my time / and myself". There furthermore exists not just a temporal separation between himself and the collective, but also a spatial separation in his address to the masses: "die then, my verse, / but die like a soldier, // like our nameless / masses, on the offensive!" While Mayakovsky gives direction from above, the now "nameless" masses are now performing the groundwork.

Deindividuation of the Artist – Brecht: Mixed Position

In contrast to Mayakovsky, Brecht is both internal and external to the collective. His central aim is to make the masses aware of their power, and in this way, he acts external. However, he does regard himself as being part of the masses and consequently includes himself to install familiarity, trust, and believability in his audience. Not only does he transform his audience, he himself also takes part in the process transformation leading to partial deindividuation.

Brecht's externality flows from his position as "teacher" (Hays 151, Berg-Pan 89, Klotz 130); he desires to install insight in his audience from a certain degree of distance. He teaches his audience what he expects from them, such as in "United Front": "On your own you have no chance. / ... / It's the work of the working class alone / To fight for liberty". Brecht's internality is showcased throughout his poems, most predominantly during the process of merging the

individual with the collective where the focus shifts from “you” to “we”, heightened with words of kinship. Such as in “None or All”, where the change in subject to the plural “we” serves to consciously and actively acknowledge Brecht’s internality “*You* whom they dare so to maltreat / Join with *all the rest* they beat / ... / Comrade, *we* will have our vengeance”, where the enjambement of “comrade” emphasizes kinship further.

There is hence evidence of both internality and externality, and the mix of the positions can be seen in “October”, where the external position taken by Brecht is interrupted by his personal authorial voice that seems merged with the collective: “And the German, *my brother*, who even / Envy those others: *they* all / Know this ...”. The inclusion of “my brother” as the authorial voice in a verse that is generally external serves to remind of the internality that Brecht desires.

Concluding Remarks: External Messiah and Fused Teacher

Both artists, regardless of the internality or externality, are actors in the construction of their envisaged collective. They are consequently, according to Alberto Melucci, able to give a meaning to themselves and their collective that is not “linear but produced by interaction, negotiation, and ... in mutual tension” (43-4). They both seek to create a “lasting unity” in the “social construction of the collective” to succeed in realizing their collective mobilization (44).

Mayakovsky loses the individual in his process of forging the collective. Because of his complete externality, messianic attitude, and lack of opportunity of self-reflection, it becomes impossible to distinguish between the general and the specific (Trotsky 150-1). In Brecht’s poetry, the search for the all-encompassing collective and the connected “discovery of universals” goes hand in hand with “acts of self-discovery” (Klotz 128). Whereas with Mayakovsky, it becomes impossible to separate the little individual from the bigger collective, Brecht’s alienation techniques give the individual the opportunity to discover himself in relation to the general collective.

The interweaving of Communism and suprematism in favor of submerging the individual (Roberts 219) is what is most dominant throughout Mayakovsky's characterization. This is in complete opposition to Brecht, where following K. Klotz, "details ... are objects in their own right, yet they also denote a larger setting" (143). This can be mirrored to Brecht's audience: they are tools to forge the desired collective, but do not lose their individual being in this process.

Conclusion: Responsibility and Participation of the Ideal Recipient

The first part of the analysis has laid bare the composition of the masses themselves, as well as the rhetorical devices which were used to mobilize the audience towards achieving the respective artist's goal. Mayakovsky appeals to emotion in an attempt to overpower individual entities in favor of the creation of a grand collective, aiming to suppress "each individual's awareness of his or her own unique personal identity" (May 80). Brecht preserves a place for the individual within the collective by making his audience aware and (self)reflective to elicit a response and demand participation. Likewise, their disparate perspectives on the importance of the individual results in different conceptions of their audience.

Implied Reader and Ideal Recipient

Their different manipulation tactics – those of emotion and reason respectively – flow from disparate notions of the artists' ideal implied reader. This concept is explained by Wolf Schmid as "the image of the recipient that the author had while writing ... the author's image of the recipient that is fixed and objectified in the text" (1). Within the poems of Mayakovsky and Brecht, the implied reader functions, more specifically, as the "ideal recipient who ... adopts the interpretive position and aesthetic standpoint put forward by the work" (7). As Mayakovsky assumes a messianic position that is external to the collective, his ideal recipient is one that is searching for guidance and meaning from sources other than and above himself. Brecht, in his mixed position, assumes an ideal recipient who's being is like his own: intellectual, curious, and motivated. He assumes a mind that can be stimulated and able to self-reflect to bring social change in objective reality. As Schmid states, "the spectrum of readings permitted by the work is wider with experimental or questioning authors" (7), and following Brecht's rhetorical devices, his individual ideal recipient would continue to have an individual being throughout the process of

the construction of the collective, and therefore bear greater capabilities than Mayakovsky's ideal recipient. These greater capabilities that are imagined with Brecht's ideal recipient carry with it an ascription of individual responsibility, something which is absent in Mayakovsky's implied reader.

Individual and Collective Responsibility

As discussed, Mayakovsky's newly constructed abstract masses do not yield a place for the individual. This view on the constellation of the collective, combined with the lack of capabilities assumed in his ideal recipient, lead to an absence of individual responsibility. He assumes a fully coherent and united mass, and because of this, one can only discuss their *collective* responsibility in the struggle for social change as "collective responsibility does not reduce to the responsibility of individuals aggregated together" (May 76). Within the poetry of Brecht, there is still an individual within the collective, and thus there is still room for *individual* responsibility. The individual is still able – and even encouraged – to continue to self-reflect, remain curious, and question their position within the collective. Brecht's audience becomes "aware of themselves as constantly transformed ... their thinking determined by social being rather than their thinking determining their Being" (Glahn 98-9). In contrast with Mayakovsky, Brecht's reader continues to be in a reflective state, due to the alienation techniques employed, and this compels them to act with intention when undertaking action towards social change, meaning they can thus be attributed individual moral responsibility (May 83).

The Match of Mobilization Techniques and Ideal Recipient

While one cannot speak of the success-rate or effectiveness of a mobilization technique, one can speak of the match between the employed technique and its interpellation on the one hand and the capabilities attributed to the imaged reader on the other. Vladimir Mayakovsky's mobilization exists on an emotional level, where grand metaphors are used to sway the audience of the importance of his cause. His conception of the collective is one of complete unity, the individual being attributed lesser importance and their capabilities regarded as irrelevant.

Bertolt Brecht has greater faith in his readers' capability and humanity – evident from his more complex and 'inviting' poetry – and consequently motivates the individual to participate in the poetic process. Brecht's mobilization, interpellation, and ascription of responsibility is accepted by his audience because of his partial internal position within his addressed collective, as well as through his invocations of familiarity, kinship, and colloquiality through his rhetorical devices. Because Brecht leaves room for the individual to recognize himself and participate within the poems, the reader's capabilities are encouraged and acknowledged, leading to greater expectations, greater responsibility, but also greater opportunity. Brecht, as a result, achieves greater recognition of his audience in his interpellation; he does make one realize that they are the subject that was addressed by the Subject.

Discussion

While this analysis, one where the potential impact of art on reality is studied, can prove fruitful in other domains, too, there are some limits to this current research that correspondingly provide opportunities for further research. First, only translations are used in assessing the match of mobilization. This entails the conscious decision that poetic devices such as rhyme, rhythm, and other phonetic elements have not been discussed. Naturally, including these could yield more specific and detailed results.

Furthermore, communist and Marxist ideology have not been discussed in depth – as to let the focus remain on the artistry – and closer inspection of this ideology and the influence on the artists could provide additional or disparate insights. For example, with respect to Marxist artists, one can further delve into the different perspectives on responsibility, and perhaps invoke the structure-agency-dilemma within the analysis of literary works. This is also the case with the concept of responsibility – where some controversy still reigns – and so a further and more detailed interweaving of literary analysis with such concepts from political and social theory can procure interesting insights.

To conclude, in this analysis Futurism has been the center of influence for Mayakovsky's poetry, while it proved more difficult to place Brecht within a literary movement. As in theatre interactions with the audience are of a different nature, the decision was made here to not include a theatrical movement to compare it with Futurism. However, mobilization and responsibility can be further explored within readings of theatre, where the disparate interactions with and the role of the audience (such as within dramatic and epic theatre) can produce results that differ from the ones found here.

In either case, perspectives on and interpretations of art are inexhaustible, and these analyses continue to confirm as well as fuel the power of art, albeit aesthetical or ideological.

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