

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Baal: A Directorial Study of Bertolt Brecht's First Play

by

Michael Fenton

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA

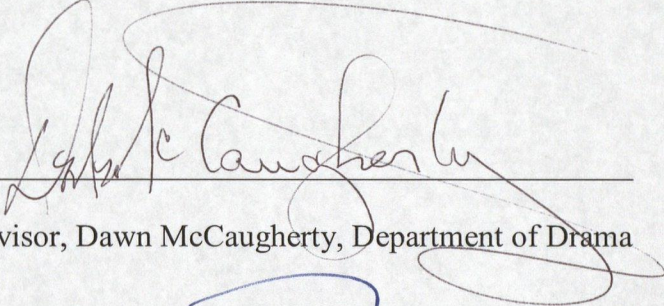
CALGARY, ALBERTA

APRIL, 2007

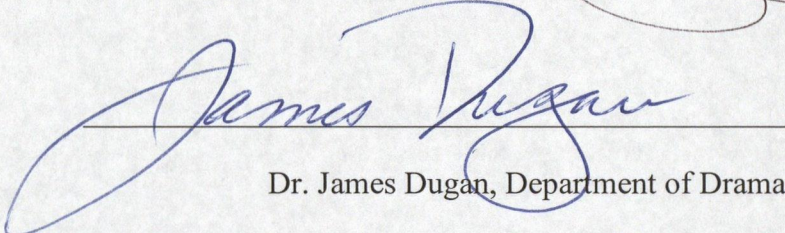
©Michael Fenton 2007

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

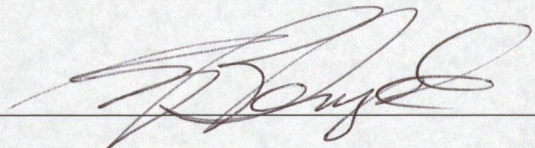
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Baal: A Directorial Study of Bertolt Brecht's First Play" submitted by Michael Fenton in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.



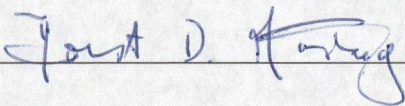
Supervisor, Dawn McCaugherty, Department of Drama



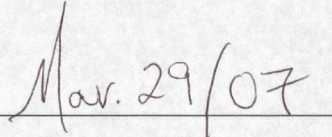
Dr. James Dugan, Department of Drama



Gavin Semple, Department of Drama



Dr. Horst Mastag,
Department of Germanic, Slavic and East Asian Studies



Date

ABSTRACT

This Artist's Statement presents a directorial process, which led to a theatrical production of Bertolt Brecht's Baal. The play was presented at the University of Calgary by the Department of Drama in the University Theatre from October 24 to November 4, 2006.

Covering topics relevant to the directing of a play, this Artist's Statement reflects critically and concisely on the research, analysis and staging of Baal. The introduction presents a very brief outline of the play's genesis and questions its contemporary relevancy. Chapter 1 provides a treatment of the historicity surrounding the play text; the second chapter analyzes the play text with a focus on production; Chapter 3 gives a summary of translating the research and analysis into a staging of the play and the fourth chapter is a critique of the outcome.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Thesis Approval.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: Literary/Historical, Socio-Political Context of the Play Text.....	2
CHAPTER 2: Analysis of the Play Text with a Focus on Production.....	15
CHAPTER 3: Analytical Summary of Translating the Research and Analysis into a Staging of the Play.....	25
CHAPTER 4: Critique on the Outcome of the Play.....	37
WORKS CITED.....	42
WORKS CONSULTED.....	43

INTRODUCTION

Bertolt Brecht wrote the play Baal in 1918 at twenty years of age. It was not produced until 1923, which was in part due to the profuse sexual content. This piece of dramatic literature was the first play from this prolific writer, the first major theatrical work by arguably the most influential western dramatist of the twentieth-century.

I ask myself is this play, written in German and translated into English, a piece created for an audience in early twentieth-century Germany worth doing? Is this play still relevant to a modern audience?

As the director I contemporized the setting and some of the language to a general resemblance of modern day North America. The translation used in the production and referred to within this Artist's Statement is that by William E. Smith and Ralph Mannheim. What drew me to this translation was the provocative imagery of the poetry and the contemporary feel presented through the language of the text. In order to avoid confusion with the namesake Baal within this Artist's Statement the following code will be used: Baal underlined refers to the play, Baal not underlined refers to the character and the "deity Baal" refers to the god.

CHAPTER 1:

Literary/Historical, Socio-Political Context of the Play Text

Bertolt Brecht's play Baal represents the influences and desires the young writer sought at the time of the writing. A privileged bourgeois upbringing allowed Brecht to have a lifestyle that gave him time to study and experiment with his writing, which both advertently and inadvertently brought him into contact with a variety of artistic and philosophical influences. The deity Baal, from the ancient Phoenician and Ugarit polytheistic pantheons, provided the unromantic artist character upon which to base his play. Dealing with a god that has human frailties and commits acts considered immoral to society provided an avenue for Brecht to present a tough, gifted, young artist that does not follow the rules set out by society--just as young Brecht viewed himself.

Coming from a middle-class family, Brecht was fully immersed in the lifestyle of the bourgeoisie. Although he held the strict moral and ethical values of polite society in contempt, especially in regards to conservative sexuality, he was always willing to use the bourgeois society to his benefit. The sexual frankness and pursuit we see in Baal is reflected in Brecht's own life. As Brechtian scholar John Fuegi in Brecht and Company notes, "The letters, poems, stories and diaries of his late teens and the first half of his twenties speak of an omnivorous sexuality seeking any outlet or inlet, male or female, young or old" (19). This ever-present sexuality is a dominant characteristic within Baal, and is carried over from Brecht's earlier poetry. The German male mentality of the time period in regards to sexuality held men in much higher esteem than women and Brecht was certainly no different in his opinions and actions. This misogyny practiced by Brecht

went so far as to alienate women as sexual toys; Brecht believed men were the real source of love. Fuegi compares Brecht's differences in attraction between the genders:

For all of Brecht's pursuit of young women as sexual partners, there is about this almost automatic exercise a pervasive sense of dread, dirt, violation, danger, the loss of self, and the loss of control. When they speak of women, the poems and diaries, and later the short stories and plays, are usually contemptuous and degrading. Women are useful as sexual partners, but the texts make plain that sex with women does not equal love. Love is something between men. And it is of such love that he sang to the young, slightly dandified men that gathered about him in his bedroom, or swam with in the river Lech, or spent time with in restaurants, beer halls and brothels. (Brecht and Co. 25)

Exploring the idea of homosexuality in his writing, Brecht seems to make no differentiation between this sexual orientation and sadomasochism. Drawing parallels with the character Baal, Fuegi writes of Brecht's fascination with tough sadomasochistic men:

He writes of how easy it is, if one has enough Baal-like vitality, to get angels (whose gender is not specified) to lie down on their stomachs to be mounted from behind as they "beg for the final things." In poems and short stories, as well as his letters and diaries, parade ruthless, black booted, whip-bearing males, often aroused by murder, rape, and other forms of sadomasochism. (Brecht and Co. 56)

As we see in Baal, the only true love that Baal finds is with his homosexual lover Ekart. The love for the two women, Johanna and Sophie, is genuine, but their love is abandoned after he receives great pleasure from taking their virginity. Just as in Brecht's life, when a

person was not able to benefit him anymore he severed ties with him or her in order to secure his own individual autonomy.

With the devastating aftermath of World War One in Germany came a renouncement of the individual; a multitude of experimental artistic searches that flew in the face of following the moral and ethical practices of the status quo. As Eric Bentley tells us in The Brecht Commentaries, we see this denunciation in Baal: “The rejection of the individual that comes with the twentieth century, and especially after World War I, is a rejection of the society around him, and even of society as such. Baal is the asocial man” (124). Brecht practiced this asocial behaviour in his daily routines and Baal portrays extreme levels of the behaviour. Mannheim and Willett point out that the title of Baal went through several revisions and around the 1930’s (during Brecht’s turn to didacticism) was called, “Bad Baal the Antisocial Man” (Bertolt Brecht: Collected Plays 349). Modeled after the Expressionist movement’s pursuit of expression through a grotesque and distorted vision of emotional portrayal, which developed at an accelerated pace after the catastrophic effects of WWI, Baal leads a life of nonconformity through his aberrant and extreme actions and poetry.

The effect from the explosion of the Expressionist movement in Germany during and immediately following WWI is seen in Baal. Even through Brecht’s own contentions that he held Expressionism in disregard and wrote the play as a rebuttal to Johst’s Expressionist play The Lonely One, Baal’s distorted and emotionally wrought through-line of nature and sexuality give it a strong Expressionist appeal. Part of what Expressionist artists were searching for--as portrayed in Baal--was in the expression of sensation: the sexual sensation or sensuality, innocence and nature. Brecht used the

dramatic style to his advantage in the text's sexual energy and the deity Baal's connection with nature. The Expressionist's use of mission, whether it was in the plot or theme of the play, was used to try and improve the moral state of humanity and expose the ridiculousness of the world. The main difference between Brecht and the mainstream Expressionists was the Expressionist's sense of mission and Brecht's revulsion towards this mission's moral idealism, which Brecht considered absurd. Walter H. Sokel tells us of Brecht's parodying of the Expressionist sense of mission in his Introduction to An Anthology of German Expressionist Drama:

Its ecstatic humanism is the surface froth. But beneath it lies a cynical, bitter, and sardonic spirit. This spirit informed some of the finest and most brilliant works of Expressionism, from Carl Sternheim to Bert Brecht. The parodying of the sense of mission, or, rather, the demonstration of its absurdity, lies at the heart of Sternheim's comedies and Brecht's early plays. (xxiv)

Within this post-WWI rejection of society and the explosive emotion of the Expressionists, Brecht goes to the most basic of all experiences, the physical one. As Sokel asserts, "Baal rejects society not because he believes in a new ideal but because he is bored and revolted. In his boredom, which is his revolt, only one thing can inspire him – physical experience" (xxvii). Through the physical experience and attack on Christianity and sentimentality we see Brecht move Baal into an Expressionistic realism. Sokel comments on this transition and how Baal brought out the celebratory side of Expressionism:

Baal lives what Expressionists, like Ludwig Rubiner, envisioned and proclaimed. He is "man in the center," embodying "explosion," "intensity," "catastrophe," the

rhythm and color of life uprooted from all traditions. However, in creating Baal, Brecht made Expressionism “realistic.” He freed it from the remnants of Christian spirituality and the sweetish l’art nouveau or Jugendstil sentiment. He likewise stripped it of the illusion that the explosive liberation of “essential man” could be compatible with humanism. Burning away all comforts, Brecht showed the Dionysiac essence of Expressionism. (xxix)

The Expressionistic traits found within Brecht’s early work show how the dramatic style influenced him and was used as a base to form his work. A parallel in strength of influence may be drawn here with German philosopher Friedrich W. Nietzsche’s crusade for immorality in his creation of the Superman, which is seen throughout Baal, specifically in Baal’s contempt for society’s created morals and values and his misogyny.

Nietzsche made a strong impression on young Brecht. Fuegi tells us that his bedroom door was “inscribed with ten commandments as formulated in Nietzsche’s Thus Spake Zarathustra” (Brecht and Co., 34-35). Nietzschean philosophy had a very powerful effect on the German population of the early twentieth-century with Brecht being no exception, influences that certainly come through in Baal. Roy Pascal in his Introduction to Nietzsche’s Thus Spake Zarathustra, asserts that through Nietzsche’s writing “he not only affected men’s values, but also influenced their actions, thus in some degree changing the shape of history” (v). Nietzsche’s stance against morality and for misogyny bleeds through in Baal, from Baal himself to all the men vying for his attention. Even though Baal is amoral in his actions, which comes from Brecht’s desire to understand the innocence within people’s harmful actions, Nietzsche’s dialectics on immorality must have played a crucial role in the development of Baal’s negative feelings for Christianity

and the immorality that the people who do not love him feel he commits. In Nietzsche's last two paragraphs in his chapter titled "Morality as Anti-Nature" from Twilight of the Idols, we see the same contempt for morality that we also see in Baal; this aversion is expressed by stating Christianity's moral harm to society and that true understanding comes from the immoralists:

Morality, insofar as it condemns for its own sake, and not out of regard for the concerns, considerations, and contrivances of life, is a specific error with which one ought to have no pity – an idiosyncrasy of degenerates which has caused immeasurable harm.

We others, we immoralists, have, conversely, made room in our hearts for every kind of understanding, comprehending, and approving. We do not easily negate; we make it a point of honour to be affirmers. More and more, our eyes have opened to that economy which needs and knows how to utilize all that the holy witlessness of the priest, of the diseased reason in the priest, rejects – that economy in the law of life which finds an advantage even in the disgusting species of the prigs, the priests, the virtuous. What advantages? But we ourselves, we immoralists, are the answer. (30-31)

The belief that answers came from actions considered immoral (but pleasurable) is reflected through Baal's search for artistic enlightenment.

The misogyny mentioned earlier in regards to Brecht's bourgeois upbringing and early poetry is directly linked to Nietzsche. In Brecht's hometown of Augsburg, Fuegi contends that Brecht used to be fond of: "Slapping his whip against this side of his boot and quoting Nietzsche, he would declare: 'Wenn du zum Weibe gehst, vergiss die

Peitsche nicht' (when you go to a woman, don't forget to take a whip)" (Brecht and Co. 55). This whip-bearing male is of course echoing the tough sadomasochistic characters from his writings and is shown through the actions and dialogue in Baal. Brecht encapsulates this Hedonistic male character in scene three when Ekart tries to convince Baal to travel with him from their secure surroundings:

EKART: Baal! Stop this! Come with me, brother! To the roads, with their hard dust--in the evening the air will be violet. To the bars filled with drunken men--while the bitches you've knocked up drop into the black rivers. To the cathedrals, with their small white women; you will say: May I breathe here? To the cow barns, to sleep among the cattle--dark and full of the mooing of cows. And to the forests, where the brazen gong rings above you and you forget the light of the sky--and God has forgotten you. Do you remember what the sky looks like? You've turned into a tenor! Come with me brother! Dancing and music and drinking! Drenched to the skin with rain! Drenched to the skin with sun! Darkness and light! Women and dogs! Have you sunk so low? (Bertolt Brecht: Collected Plays 14)

As well as resembling characters from his poetry previous to the writing of Baal and the misogynistic idealism of Nietzsche, this tough male character also bears a distinct likeness to his cabaret-performing idol Frank Wedekind.

Wedekind was a powerful artistic influence on Brecht as he wrote Baal. Through Wedekind we see the rough and violent homosexual type that we see in the character Baal. Fuegi notes that, "Brecht was also clearly drawn to a tough, 'rough trade' kind of man, represented in real life by the whip and pistol-toting Wedekind?" (Brecht and Co. 35-

36). Wedekind's influence on Brecht is paramount in understanding his creation of Baal and the German male psyche of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century. The cabaret performance techniques, Nietzschean influence of misogyny, chaotic lifestyle and the epitome of the non-romantic poet are all captured in Wedekind and for this Brecht idolized him. Confirming the strong affinity that Brecht had towards Wedekind, Fuegi reports "he was and would remain a model for Brecht's own life and style of poetry and theatrical performance" (Brecht and Co. 31). The prologue in Baal is very similar to the prologue given by the Animal Trainer in Wedekind's Earth Spirit, which are both written in verse with physically and sexually aggressive overtones, and create for the audience the expectation that they are going to witness something closer in resemblance to a circus than the actions of a traditional play. Drawing a parallel between comparable traits of Wedekind and Brecht's characters, Klaus Völker in Brecht: A Biography, claims that, "People see Baal, as they see Wedekind's Lulu, as an animal, a creature without a soul" (49). Brecht loved Wedekind's style of writing and presentation and, as with other influences, he chose to incorporate them into his own drama.

Brecht's drama, which contains pieces and full writings of his own poetry, was modeled after the poets he held in the highest regard. Fuegi notes the poetic influences of Brecht's early poetry: "Again and again, like his poetic models of Wedekind, Villon, Rimbaud, and Kipling, he will write of violent, amoral, love-hate relationships among men, animals and women in exotic, wildly improbable locales" (Brecht and Co. 24). The wild abandoned lifestyles of these men also shaped the structure of Baal. The well-known homosexual affair of Verlaine and Rimbaud creates the basis of Baal and Ekart's relationship; the criminal and artistic pursuits of Villon are represented through Baal's

waywardness, pleasure seeking and, ultimately, his death. Noting the connection of these poets with Baal, Völker points out their similarities:

Baal's homosexual based relationship with Ekart was a paraphrase of Verlaine's roving, dissolute life with Rimbaud. The wanderings of the two poets through Belgium and England had a substantial influence on the play. Baal was to look like Verlaine: 'His is the uncomfortable skull of Socrates and Verlaine,' Brecht wrote in the preface to his 1919 version, and Neher based his portrait of Baal on photographs and drawings of Verlaine. Details in the life of Francois Villon also played their part in forming the character of Baal, his restless, vagrant existence and the dismal circumstances of his death, his end 'in the undergrowth'. Brecht had already had the idea of writing a Baal before Johst's play was performed: 'I want to write a play about Francois Villon, who was a murderer, highwayman and ballad-writer in Brittany in the fifteenth century.' (Brecht: A Biography 45-46)

These poet's lifestyles and topics of writing are inherently part of Baal. A correlation of great extent may even be made that Brecht got the initial framework of the idea to write Baal from the poem written in 1888 by Rudyard Kipling titled, O BAAL, HEAR US! The first five lines of the poem are:

Moralists we,
 From over the sea,
 From the land where philosophers plenty be –
 From the land that produced no Kants with a K,
 But many Cants with a C. (Early Verse by Rudyard Kipling 409)

The poem deals with the view of religious morals in regards to the general views of the land's inhabitants, and is similar in a parodying style to the contempt held by Baal and spoken of throughout his poetry. The lifestyles and the violent and often homoerotic writings of these poets helped create the dramatic structure of Baal, which in turn offers a strong reflection of the deity Baal.

Brecht's story of Baal does not follow the myths from the ancient stories of the deity Baal, but instead uses the god for multiple symbolic representations and as a character to structure his story of an unromantic amoral artist. The deity Baal was--at the height of his popularity--the head of the Phoenician and Ugarit polytheistic pantheons, and as Leah Bronner informs us in The Stories of Elijah and Elisha: "Baal was a god who was closely connected with fertility, field and cattle. He, by giving rain enabled growth to take place and thus made man and beast fertile and fecund" (41). Brecht's use of rain and fertility of plants and animals is found throughout in the verse and prose of Baal. An especially poignant example of the character Baal's desire for oneness with nature is in scene six when he contends: "Why can't a man sleep with plants?" (25). While illustrating the deity's connection with vegetation and fertility, it also lets Brecht bring out the amorality of the character Baal, by expressing his wonderment in the most basic elements of nature. This amorality is perhaps most clearly generated when in scene twelve Baal quickly breaks away from his violent abuse of Ekart to look at the stars before taking him away lovingly:

BAAL: (Pressing Ekart close) Now I've got you close. I've got you. Can you smell me? It's better than women! (Lets go) Look Ekart, you can see stars over the woods. (40)

This violent nature conveyed through Brecht's writing of the character Baal is usually transcribed as an immoral characteristic. Following that train of thought within the ancient canons of Baal, Bronner writes that, "These texts do not attribute great moral or ethical traits to the god Baal" (The Stories of Elijah and Elisha 47). However, Brecht modifies this immorality of Baal into amorality, by making the character innocent--innocent like a baby is innocent. Bentley comments on Brecht's writing of the innocence in Baal and how it is reflected in the play as guilt and innocence:

He lends Baal a quality of innocence, but it is an innocence on the other side of guilt. Our minds, which are used to thinking here of a duality (guilt-innocence), have to stretch themselves a little to think in terms of three instead of two: innocence (1), guilt, and innocence (2). This innocence (2) is the subject of much of Brecht's writing in this period. It could even be said that around 1919-1921 his favorite subject was the innocence that can accrue to extremely vicious, even extremely criminal, people. It is as if one were to speak of regained innocence in an old whore. (The Brecht Commentaries 125)

Baal is guilty and innocent at the same time: guilty in the eyes of moral society, yet innocent due to his amorality. This innocence, along with Baal's artistic prowess, is what drives the flock of people to vie for his attention, which in turn is how Brecht saw himself, hence his infatuation with the god. An analysis of the play's imagery connected to the deity Baal will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Eclectically structured and pulled from various aspects of his life, Brecht used an array of influences melded together to create Baal. He wanted to show a tough and animalistic artist, not a weak and fluffy stereotype. Clearly influenced by Wedekind,

Verlaine, Rimbaud, Villon and Kipling, Brecht took intriguing aspects from all these artists to formulate the artist he saw himself becoming. Noting the lifestyle characteristics of young Brecht, Fuegi draws an uncanny comparison to the character Baal in the use of his artistic abilities to win the admiration of others:

At first in private, and later in settings like restaurants, bars and brothels, he noticed not only how his audiences were swept away, but that this could easily lead to sexual enthrallment also. Somehow it did not seem to matter that he was not conventionally handsome and none too clean, that his teeth were already rotting and that his breath stank, and that his unmatched, though expensive, clothes looked as if he slept in them; it all was part of this charm, a link to tough poetic models like the poet-murderer Villon or the poet lovers Verlaine and Rimbaud. (Brecht and Co. 20)

This description of the unromantic artist Brecht and the deity Baal, whose debauchery was worshipped by the ancients and Brecht, provided a perfect framework for the play Baal. This deity, who was seen as a threat to the burgeoning monotheistic Hebrew religion, is an ideal choice for a character that could be used to revolt against the societal morals and ethics of young Brecht's Germany; a reverse parallel to the prophet Elijah's revolt against Baal worship in archaic Canaan. Brecht not only saw strength and vitality in this ancient fertility god, but also saw a direct representation of himself. Fuegi's description of young Brecht's behaviour shows the desire the poet had to be morally and ethically aloof and unopposed:

The poet himself firmly believed that his own genius placed him beyond "good and evil," and that he could love as loudly and as unconventionally as he desired,

regardless of what pain this might cause others. In a universe operating by the rules written on his apartment door, he was master and beyond bourgeois conventions. (Brecht and Co. 36)

This is the mindset of young Brecht, who considered the characteristics of the ancient deity Baal perfect for a play about an amoral poet--a poet who roams the countryside in search of artistic enlightenment through pleasure; this pleasure may be found in any way, shape or form regardless of whether society considers it immoral or not.

CHAPTER 2:

Analysis of the Play Text with a Focus on Production

Baal is a framework for Brecht's ideal artist, who rejects society's morals, lives for pleasure and strives to attain artistic enlightenment. Usually characterized as a comment on Johst's romantic-poet character in The Lonely One, Baal's love for Ekart is also considered to be an obvious representation of the poets Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud's tumultuous relationship. The lifestyle patterns of medieval poet Francois Villon and the text's symbolism through imagery of the ancient deity Baal are also clearly apposite. Following these given contextual elements of the play, and in accord with them, the text was analyzed with the desire to bring it to production via Baal's creative pursuit of artistic development through pleasure, while staying true to the eclectic nature of the piece and allowing the shocking aspects of it to be brought forth.

A dichotomy of dramatic styles was used to embellish the dramatic action of the play. Through researching Baal, a world was discovered that only partially fits within realism, and following the eclectic writing pattern of the piece--in terms of Brecht's lifestyle input--a high level of intensity needed to be expressed through emotion. Nothing appeals to emotion stronger than the dramatic style of Expressionism, and since historical research has pointed out the Expressionistic characteristics within the piece it became obvious the play would greatly benefit from this exploration in design and performance: Expressionism used to highlight intensified character emotion, specifically within the animalistic nature of the character Baal. Playing with Expressionism before in previous directing has made clear the tendency of the style to obscure meaning instead of punctuate it. Through control of the Expressionistic occurrences the style can be very

effective in its communication to the audience. Expressionist Scholar David F. Kuhns in his book German Expressionist Theatre, speaks of the abruptness or jarring aspects of Expressionist acting in regards to gesture and notes that it “served to focus expression rather than obscure it” (108). Contrasting it with realism can better attain this focusing of expression, by providing an aesthetic greatly differing from realism. The character Baal’s conflicting personality from appeasement with nature to raging anger with disobedience and morality is nicely manipulated by using this contrast of style. The text of Baal lends itself to a blend of contrast through its writing style, and it would be very difficult to express the dynamics of the piece to an audience otherwise. It would be ridiculously bathetic if scenes three, thirteen and fifteen, in their attempt to distance the audience and force them to pay attention to a strong change of text intention, did not depart from realism, just as the violence would lose its forcefulness if not done in realism, as the disgust and horror would not be as powerful and convincing. The structure of the plot also benefits from a timeline contained in realism, as we are able to clearly see the rise and ruination of Baal in a chronological progression.

Through the plot structure of Baal we see the protagonist progress artistically and reach his artistic height when he is coming to his physical demise. Baal presents the ultimate example of the stereotype of an artist sacrificing his health for his art in order to find artistic enlightenment. In the play we see an increase of art produced by the character Baal as his health declines. The first half of the play is quite a static environment for Baal because we do not see any movement or growth of the character. Before Baal decides to go traveling with Ekart his artistry seems to be growing at a very slow pace. In the second half of the play, when Baal has left with Ekart for what turns out to be an eight-year

sojourn, there is a dramatic increase in the amount of poetry written by Baal and the depth of his imagery. New discoveries of pleasure regarding nature and people in the fresh environments of his travels spur the creative process. A more dynamic setting is needed for his artistic exploration--a pleasurable setting full of vice, mental and physical abuse; he literally dies due to his lifestyle in an attempt to reach his artistic enlightenment.

The other significant vein of plot structure is Baal's progression of love. While his view of the wealthy married woman Emilie is that of a plaything, Baal's love for the females Johanna and Sophie is genuine. He loves these women until he realizes he has taken away their innocence, which is, ironically, what lured him to them from the beginning, or until they start annoying him with their constant presence. Baal holds the view that they simply no longer hold any use for him, so he forces them away from him, which leads to his indirect destruction of them as they commit suicide on account of his actions. Baal's love for Ekart is tumultuous to say the least; however, it is authentic. Showing the depth of his love for Ekart, Baal performs the ultimate act of desperation in keeping Ekart's love for himself: Baal kills him when he thinks Ekart's reciprocated love is wavering. To kill what you cannot have does not allow anyone else to take pleasure from that source; Baal controls his relationships, by orchestrating his lover's deaths--both directly and indirectly. This control over life and death has similarities to the deity Baal and his power to indirectly administer the abundance of pleasure in life through feast or famine

Brecht uses the deity Baal as more than just a namesake for the play Baal; Brecht uses significant aspects of the deity to transform Baal into a human figure. This human

figure still contains aspects of the fertility god and shows his strength and weaknesses within the seasons. Arvid S. Kapelrud in Baal in the Ras Sharma Texts tells us that because Baal is a god of agriculture, “it is obvious that Baal’s attitude is determined by the shifting of the seasons. When the rains came, Baal was revived and wanted to fight. When the dry season started, Baal was dying and no more able to take up a fight with his adversary” (101). In the play we see Baal becoming revitalized with spring in scene four, when he explains to Sophie that the reason he has ambushed and brought her to his apartment is to resuscitate the spring cycle, which is enhanced by the presence of her innocence:

BAAL: But it’s spring. There had to be something white in this damned cave! A cloud! (Bertolt Brecht: Collected Plays 22)

This mythical aspect of the god Baal physically affected by the seasonal changes is also contrasted by much more human characteristics. In the book The Stories of Elijah and Elisha, Leah Bronner contends that gods from the pantheon in ancient Ugarit behaved in many ways similar to the human counterparts that worshipped them, however, they were above moral considerations:

In the Ras Shamra texts, we get descriptions of the gods behaving in a most human manner, they eat, drink and make love. They are subject in short, to all human desires and show the same failings as human beings do, in pursuing the fulfillment thereof. They are not moral and their actions are never guided by ethical considerations. In fact it is interesting to notice that the only mention probably of ethics in these texts is to be found in the Krt and Aqht texts, which deal with human beings. (135)

These human characteristics of the deity Baal are obviously seen in the character Baal and conflict with the biblical concept of God, who is above all human qualities and errors. The innocent amorality from the ancient deity Baal and the anti-morality of Nietzschean philosophy have been amalgamated with the lifestyles and work of Brecht's most influential poets and create his ideal artist. This artist fulfills Brecht's own desire to search out pleasure and understanding of the innocence within people considered immoral in society.

The other characters in the play show a clear fascination with this man who is able to get away with immoral activities simply because of his artistic ability, charm and acceptance of his amorality. This fascination is seen daily within our modern society, and is really Brecht commenting on himself and how much he was getting away with in terms of breaking society's rules. Everybody in the play is there to serve Baal and bring him pleasure; if they do not he rids himself of them. Only when he is weak and dying do people dare to express their contempt for him in some form of action. Baal is considered by many to be a disgusting beast, but fascination for his rejection of society's morals, pursuit of pleasure and artistic ability outweigh their antipathy and allow him to continue.

It is this constant search for pleasure that Baal strives for and is partially attained with finding innocence. Looking back on Baal, Bentley writes that Brecht had always intended his play to be a search for happiness: "More than thirty years later, Brecht was to take a look back at this play and speak of the love of pleasure, the search for happiness, as its subject" (The Brecht Commentaries 127). This search for pleasure is what Baal does in his amoral way, a search that hurts and scandalizes others but does further his artistry through its discoveries. The ultimate form of that pleasure is to be found in the

release of death. And death is certainly a topic surrounding young Brecht, who is writing this play in Germany in a world that is coming apart at the end of WWI. Baal fantasizes about Johanna after she dies because she has reached the ultimate form of pleasure and innocence, death. Bentley reminds us that death has surrounded and is continually commented on by contemporary poets and has an obvious universal following:

From Hemingway, ...to Samuel Beckett in the 1950's with his "nothing is more real than nothing," contemporary poets and poet-novelists and poet-dramatists have found themselves confronted and surrounded by nothingness. Brecht found himself in this situation in 1918 at the frighteningly youthful age of nineteen or twenty. "Das Schönste ist das Nichts." ("The most beautiful thing is nothing.") Googoo says this in the thirteenth scene of Baal. Brecht says it in every scene of Baal. Man, here, is alienated from the others and from himself, to the degree that both others and self may be said to nonexistent, to be nothing. This idea--better: this sentiment, this lacerating conviction--give a new poignancy to the old "ashes to ashes, dust to dust." If death is, on the one hand, an ironic ending to pleasure and beauty, it is, on the other, a direct, unironic continuation of the universal nothingness, the omnipresent death-in-life. (Brecht Commentaries 128-129)

This thinking of pleasure as being achieved through death, of how it should not be feared but embraced and even laughed at, as Baal does at the end of the play on his way to death, is tied into what is considered a much younger and more exuberant thought process of living fast and dying young: attaining all the pleasure you can from life before it is over, and treating death itself as something desirable. Once again drawing on the experiences of WWI and the vast amount of young lives lost, it is easy to see why this

model would be appealing to a man of twenty. The societal habits of post-WWI Germany and the youthful disregarding of the old value system bears a strong resemblance to the actions of Baal, who is considered amoral, immoral, or at least fascinating in the world of the play.

The imagery in Baal is strongly oriented towards nature and supports the connection with the deity. Completely accepting nature and anything provided through the natural environment, Baal behaves as an amoral entity similar to acts of weather and other animal species. Sokel explains Brecht's view of what is natural in Baal as "a return to nature, not as Rousseau and the Romantics had conceived it, but as Darwinism taught modern man to see it" (An Anthology of German Expressionist Drama xxvii). Baal explores the Nietzschean influenced notion that what is morally wrong and right has been created by society and is not held in belief by the rest of the animal world. In order for the artist Baal to pursue his creative process, he must not be hindered by social implications that bind him creatively. Zealously welcoming and enjoying all aspects that the natural world can provide, Baal fights man's created social morality that prevents him from enjoying the innate pleasures given by nature, as expressed by Charles R. Lyons in his essay "Bertolt Brecht's Baal: The Structure of Images":

His acceptance of nature has two sources: first of all in Brecht's actual displacement of the myth of Baal, in which there is identification of the character with the elemental forces, the rain, the wind, and the sky; and, secondly, in the actual passive nature of Baal as a patient upon whom the forces of nature act and who does not attempt to order or justify nature within his own mind. (317-318)

Creating imagery that is derived from the natural environment and the human body, Baal shows that everything in the natural world accordingly justifies its own existence and actions; therefore, the character Baal does not feel the need to justify his own actions to society.

Independent and unrestricted in their movements, Baal uses clouds to represent freedom of mobility and independent behaviour. Scene fourteen depicts the movements of clouds as something to be admired and as a blueprint for life:

BAAL: The water is warm. We can lie on the sand like crabs. And then there are the bushes, and the white clouds in the sky. Ekart!

EKART: What do you want?

BAAL: I love you.

EKART: I'm too comfortable.

BAAL: Did you see those clouds a while ago?

EKART: Yes. They're shameless. A woman passed by just now.

BAAL: I don't care for women anymore... (45)

Clouds hold no responsibility for their actions; Baal envies this behaviour and emulates it. Substituting the sky and clouds for society and people represents an ideal social environment for Baal, which allows behaviour considered shameful and is not judged or controlled, but considered natural.

White is frequently referred to as being the colour of the clouds and the bodies of the women that are sought after. Innocence is symbolized through white and is exactly what Baal seeks for pleasure, as it indicates the highest level of pleasure one is able to attain. Baal desires to use people's innocence and articulates their innocence when he

describes objects as white, as when he asks Sophie Barger if she has brothers and sisters and comments on milk and her thighs:

SOPHIE BARGER: Yes. They need me.

BAAL: The air in this room is like milk. The willows by the river, dripping wet, frowzy with the rain. You must have pale thighs. (23-24)

Purity as a form of sinlessness sexually arouses Baal, and in his domination over these inexperienced people with whom he has sexual relations he receives pleasure from conquering their innocence. Baal directly compares age to purity, because only after experiencing unethical behaviour does an increase in age lead to the acceptance of society's standard moral conventions. Baal explains this lack of innocence in the aged, when he questions Sophie Barger about her mother, while trying to seduce her:

SOPHIE BARGER: But-at home-my mother! I've got to go home.

BAAL: Is she old?

SOPHIE BARGER: She's seventy.

BAAL: Then she's accustomed to wickedness. (23)

Explaining the mother's knowledge and supposed understanding of wickedness, Baal rids Sophie Barger of her virginity.

Creating imagery through the human body, knees are used as a way to express vitality, strength and desire, which Baal comments on regularly as an indication of women wanting to have sex with him:

SOPHIE BARGER: Please don't think I'm bad.

BAAL: Why not? You're a woman like any other. The faces vary. But they all have weak knees. (22)

Baal reacts to the movement or non-movement of people's knees as a way of conveying a person's confidence, willingness and ability to submit to their natural cravings. At the end of the final scene, an immobile and dying Baal is trying to get outside; as he does so, he comments to himself, "At least I can get to the door. I've still got knees, it's better in the doorway" (57). Baal ends the play crawling out through the door, because his knees are not able to function, which signifies his imminent death.

Baal is a framework for Brecht's ideal artist that lives for pleasure and does not let anything get in the way of his creative process. Jumping from realism to Expressionism we see the play bend to whatever style brings out the character's intentions most effectively. Baal's poetic oeuvre grows with enlightenment on the journey of his travels, and it increases as the play progresses. The parallel between the natural environment (personified by the deity) and Baal is reflected through his behaviour, which resembles someone acting closer to the phenomena of weather or other animals in the environment. Baal simplifies life by showing us that our behaviour need only necessitate actions that attain the goals set out by nature, which are the pleasurable acts of feeding, drinking and copulating. The pursuit of artistic enlightenment through pleasurable endeavours eventually physically kills Baal. However, the progression of his art is more important than his life; especially when ultimate pleasure is found in death: peace and innocence are restored. The deity Baal cannot exist in this modern world, just as Baal the artist cannot socially fit into his. His artistic journey at its end, he is what his poetry speaks of incessantly and what he is supposed to be: dead.

CHAPTER 3:

Analytical Summary of Translating the Research and Analysis into a Staging of the Play

My research and analysis of Baal in the staging of the play was primarily focused on the performers understanding--through body and mind--the multiple levels of complexity within the script's background and intention, while having the design concentrate on bringing the aesthetics of the piece to a contemporary audience. Baal's historical connection to the dramatic style of Expressionism reinforced my desire to implement this style, a style that was foreign to most actors involved. Through my research and analysis I concluded that the most effective way to make this piece pertinent to a modern audience was to contemporize its design and some language; I felt the psychological mindset of young Brecht telling this story in 1918 Germany would be too inaccessible for a modern audience and, therefore, not effective in addressing its intentions.

Dealing with fourteen performers, a dichotomy of styles and a script heavily steeped in religious ritual and conviction, I started my work with the actors knowing that a strong ensemble must be formed. A bond had to be made between them that would connect them to the world of the play and allow them to draw on experiences that they all held in common, a bond considered imperative by me due to the multiple roles all the actors except Baal were playing. Drawing on my experience of directing ancient Greek drama, and the primitive nature of Baal in his quest for pleasure, I felt addressing ritual would be the most effective means of creating this bond. Since Baal so heavily revolves around death, significantly, the death of a fertility god, I decided the ritual of burial,

lamenting and desecration of burial should be explored. This exploration creatively allowed the actors to cherish and find release in their disposing of a comrade hated or otherwise. Dissecting the emotions felt and finding different ways to present them honestly or openly in contempt, the performers explored individually from the onset of the work and orchestrated as a full unit in their emotional disposition at the end. Further exploration with connections between the ancient times and the present were explored through the creation and worship of the archaic fertility symbol that was attached to the deity Baal and is found throughout the script--the bull. I had the actors generate their own individual bulls and then amalgamate them into small groups, eventually leading to two rival animals that mingled and fought with one another. The end result was the full connection of the two bulls into one, and the vocal and physical animal that developed was the binding element of the ensemble, an animal that required all of the actors to play a role or it would not function; I thought this frame of mind should be instilled early, as I strongly believe in its relevancy in terms of creating a strong performance. A version of the work done in the bull-creating exercises was put on stage at the very opening of the play, so the fertility symbol of the deity and the actor cohesion could be apparent from the beginning. The ensemble work of the ritual was followed by ensemble work of the Expressionist dramatic style.

My Expressionistic acting intentions led to a much-needed actor exploration of the Expressionist dramatic style, since I was working with performers who had mostly studied and created within the style of realism. I am familiar with the Expressionist style and hold an affinity for it in terms of directing; I have also written on it within my first year of study as a graduate student. In my past experiences with the style, desired

intentions with the play and the extremes of emotion portrayed physically and verbally in the script generated an obvious need for actor discovery of Expressionistic acting. These discoveries were found through exercises that highlighted emotion; this emotion sometimes led to actor distortion and grotesqueness of body and voice. I asked the actors to let go of all inhibitions in this exploring process so they might find unique and effective ways to present their emotions when the text calls for it, and to be able to harness this emotion and make it come alive within the world of the play.

Utilizing the ensemble work and melding it with the Expressionistic style generated by the actor's experimentation encouraged the actors as a group to interact and play with each other, and ultimately produce work that physicalized and vocalized their emotional intentions. Their emotional awareness was developed so they could bring it into rehearsal and portray it through their characters, awareness that would become very effective in its intentions through contrast with realism. This contrast highlighted various aspects of the script, and we used whichever was the most effective. Through our exploration the extremes were found within both styles and incorporated in movement and voice; this being harnessed allowed us to tackle a complex script that demands extreme portrayal of emotion, violence and sexuality.

The sexual nature of the script encompasses a broad spectrum from subtle to overt sexual behaviour ranging from romantic caresses to brutal rape. I decided to keep the large amount of sexuality and punctuate the brutality by keeping it onstage and not hiding it, as Baal and his cohort's endeavours needed to be shown for character intentions, which lead to clearer audience understanding of the text. This sexuality, though it contained no nudity, was still strong enough that it merited a complete authorization by

the performers in terms of comfort and safety within its various degrees of kissing, fondling, undressing, simulated sex and rape. The performers were told by me to take the time they needed with the acting partners they would be having sexual contact with, to discuss the sexual behaviour they were going to portray, in order to become comfortable with the situations within a safe environment. I told the actors that there would be no surprises in blocking regarding sexuality, because of the fear that it might breach the performer's sexual comfort zone. All homosexuality, creation of strong sexual images, possible nudity and any other hypothetical sexual situation that could have arisen during the rehearsal process were all brought to the attention of the performers at the beginning of the rehearsal period, which allowed the actors time to become comfortable with the sexual situations and be reassured in their safety. The stage manager also made it clear that anyone who had problems with the sexual content should contact her through the actor representative or themselves.

Within the scope of my theatrical career, I have always thought it the most effective to mix the textual table work with the initial blocking and character development. Using the breakdown of the small episodic scenes, I had all characters involved in each specific scene come to a designated table to read the scene. Slowly reading from line to line and stopping as often as necessary, we searched and discussed for the meaning of the text in order to have a strong comprehension of it. This finding of units, meaning and character's characteristics not only led to a greater understanding of the text individually but also as an ensemble. For example, I would ask the actors questions regarding the multiple Biblical references within the script in a manner that would allow them to discover it themselves, and at the same time give information to

them from my research that would allow a more thorough understanding. This information was given at intervals to avoid overloading them with too much information and in order to bring back freshness to the production, especially when the actors were having difficulty finding their character's specific intentions. Once we had finished the table work for each scene I would have the actors immediately put it on the stage, since that is where it belongs. I would restrain myself from any commenting and let the actors work through the script anyway they saw fit after our recent investigation of the text. The scene discovered and initially discussed, we would move onto the next scene in chronological order. After the completion of the entire play in this manner, I started at the beginning again and started focusing more on blocking and the development of character relationships.

The title, not the content of the book Chaos According to Plan, by Brechtian scholar John Fuegi, has been the strongest influence on my theatre directing in regards to moving actors through space. Presenting a seemingly chaotic setting that encourages and promotes creativity allows performers to explore their characters, and find a stronger understanding of the text. I find that telling actors where to move to in the initial process of blocking stunts creativity and hampers and delays the performers comprehension of the script. This freedom allotted to the actors is a façade created by me to serve the purpose of my artistic agenda, an agenda that has been meticulously thought out and designed by me to give the appearance of chaos; therefore, the chaos is being used for its creative benefits and is just a tool to attain the final goal of a polished piece. With the research done and a strong notion of what the final picture will look like, I set the actors out into a rehearsal process that does not seem structured but in fact is. By letting the

actors find their own blocking I am able to have the actors invest a stronger interest and passion for the piece--a sense of pride and ownership. Often the picture created by the performers is not practical or as interesting as I feel it could look or sound so I maneuver, coach and direct them into stronger images and emotion. Another major benefit I find by using this planned organic blocking is that the performers are building on their character development through it; they are being encouraged to play with their discoveries of the characters.

Individual character development and the relationships between these characters was started in the earliest phase of the rehearsal process with the creation of the ensemble, where the performers were sometimes asked to create within the group, through the characters they would be performing on stage. Answering the performer's questions about unclear aspects of the script and heavily questioning the performers themselves was functionary in its drive to force the actors to find their character's depth and intention of action. When it became apparent that a performer could not grasp a conceptual idea of a character or was struggling with ideas, I would try to help them by giving information that I had attained through research, information that usually related to the deity Baal, Christianity, the life and influences of young Brecht and the understanding of the German mindset at the end of WWI.

This focused understanding was considered even more significant due to the multiple number of characters most actors were playing. Due to the array of characters most performers were creating, I felt it was necessary to have individual meetings with each actor. These meetings covered a general milieu of topics and concerns of the actors, but were mainly geared by myself towards making sure the performers were

distinguishing between their different characters. I wanted them to make solid decisions physically and vocally, in order to show the audience a difference from one character to the next. I would ask the actor how these characters felt and what they were reacting against. How did they move and sound? What were the definite differences between the various characters they played? After these meetings I had the actors perform exercises that concentrated on the differences of their characters through movement and sound. They needed an opportunity to explore outside of the script to attain a fuller character. Realizing the extent that I was asking these performers to use their voices, I asked a vocal coach to come into a couple of early run-throughs and listen for vocal problems. This coach helped greatly and through my permission dealt directly with the actors and ran vocal exercises with them. This not only helped these student performers create a larger variance between characters but let them be aware of their vocal strengths and weaknesses. This collaboration proved very fruitful, as was the large collaborative effort of the design process.

My working experience with my design team was positive; I really enjoyed working with them and think the play benefited from having so many people involved. There were seven designers in total: a head (set) designer, three costume designers, a lighting designer, a sound designer and a make-up designer. They were all in constant contact with the head designer and myself. The head designer and I wanted to work in a team, which created a large variety of artistic input and generated a constant barrage of new ideas; we had short but frequent meetings to bounce ideas off of each other. A myriad of ideas were brought up and many were discarded after we felt we had progressed past them, but a lot of them were kept in small eclectic bits that were

conjoined together to build upon the overall image of a circus. This circus of life had all types of creatures, some which had mythological characteristics and others that were very real. An eclectic portrayal of life that parallels the influences of young Brecht's life and desires is highlighted within the design. We wanted a world where nothing is hidden and the complexity of Brecht's influences are shown intensely, which is visually and aurally reflected through the designs leaping from natural to manmade.

The powerful yet beautiful build of the set focused on nature and simplicity; the wooden and raw set allowed us to embody the deity Baal through his attachment with nature and raw amoral actions. The vast openness of the set allowed for multiple acting spaces, which corresponded with the jumping episodic structure of the scenes. The ramps and upstage wooden flats created many entrances and exits. The entrances through the flats were narrower and created a feeling of pressure, while the ramps (in their down position) were wide and allowed the performers to flow across at a variety of angles; the pressure on the platform increased when the ramps were put-up, because it confined the actors to a smaller space.

The head designer and I played a lot with the idea of a growing mess onstage, that would comment on Baal's declining physical health and ultimate demise. The open spartan stage at the onset of the production was important for the growing degeneration throughout the play's progression, because it allowed us to fill the space with the remnants of Baal's debauchery on his way to death. The set pieces and properties were all selected and built for multiple purposes. On a practical level, the easily accessible set and property pieces, that rarely left the stage, made the physical development of the multiple scenes easier and quicker to produce. The actors wading through the fallen debris

provided a very real timeline of degeneration in the world of the play. Hiding nothing from the audience focused the significance of the piece on the acting and made it very clear that we were not attempting to lure them in with realism, but forced their suspension of disbelief; however, a disbelief that was still human and not in the world of the gods.

The lighting design played a crucial role in making each scene distinct from the other so it was contrasting and prominent, highlighting that each scene in the world of the play was very different from one another. The strong use of light and roller sounds on the shutters was incorporated to enhance the idea of nothing being hidden, but obvious changes in the world of the play. Enhancing the imagery, the lights were able to focus on bringing out nature and emotion through angles and colours. Changing with various scenes, but more indicative of change in emotion and desire, the projections were used to encapsulate an all-encompassing feeling, which pushed forth the emotional elements within the scenes. The visuals portrayed were influenced by scenes of nature and by the German Expressionist artists Grosz, Neher, Beckmann, Kokoschka and Schiele; artists who exemplify in their work the emotional beauty of nature, the rejection of society after WWI and the hidden sexual desires and happenings of German popular culture.

This popular culture was strongly embodied into the costuming of the actors as well, but held its portrayal within the twentieth-century. Fear of distancing the audience's understanding of the text with a script that is already eclectic in its movement, and seeing the same thematic aspects relevant in contemporary society, the head designer and I decided it would be more intriguing and beguiling to portray the aesthetics of the costumes by using history as a vehicle, which would comment on the modern western world in general. They were costumes that could reflect styles and fashion of the entire

twentieth-century, and drew attention to the play's modern relevancy. In terms of nudity, the lack of costumes seemed stagy and ineffective and was discarded in our design progression; I think the play has a stronger affinity towards non-sexy clothing and a tendency towards softer colour. The softer aesthetics of Baal were directly represented through his non-aggressive coloured attire, which consisted mainly of softer hues. It was very clear between the designers and myself that an ominous foreboding presence was not to be communicated through the costume's design aesthetics, as the play is just a touch dark on its own and does not need to be overwhelmed through the design aspect, which I thought would detract from the text and play into the realm of stereotype: black clothing equals bad people.

I wanted the sound to come from a diverse array of sources and used any resource I felt did the job most effectively. From the initial ensemble work the performers had been creating bull, wind and rain noises, that I implemented with and without canned sound. A variety of canned sound for nature was found and utilized to incorporate the highs and lows of the various storms; the set itself also gave the actors the tool of wood to play with. The canned music of the piece was not as eclectic as the costumes, but instead incorporated the various melodies you would hear from this vicinity's popular culture; a jarring reminder to the audience that what they are seeing onstage is relevant to this locale.

The make-up was experimented with on a grand scale and was trying to reflect unhealthiness and elevated emotion. The natural white pallor of the cast with dark thick circles around the eyes seemed the most effective (traditional Expressionist make-up) and avoided a demon or Kabuki look; however, it did bring out a more "gothic" look to the

performers, which was acceptable because it fit into that unknown underworld type that Wedekind was so fascinated with, which in turn fit into Brecht's infatuation of the innocence of people on the fringe of society.

Having no real scruples in changing the wording of scripts, even by authors as brilliant as Brecht, I took the liberty to modernize some wording of the text. In order to localize the play and draw a stronger connection with the audience I felt the text needed to be slightly altered, but still provide the embodiment of Brecht's Germany. Post-WWI Germany exudes from this text in death and rejection of society, and to lose that flavour would not only be impossible but shameful. Most changes were subtle word adjustments that brought the world of the play to the Calgary area. The most frequent of this example would be the change from the word schnapps to whisky, an obvious identity change of the common booze of Germany with the popular hard-alcohol of Southern Alberta. The head designer and I talked frequently about the type of artist today that might embody the artist Baal. What genre of music, visual or dramatic arts of today in North America exemplifies the artistic style and societal actions of the character Baal? We never came up with a solid answer, instead we found aspects through a variety of types of artists that typified Baal--once again eclectic. I had read reviews that made Baal a punk rocker and David Bowie himself personified him through the rock and roll image. I understand the choices made by these directors, however, they never completely embodied Baal enough for me, nor were they modern enough. I decided that one of Brecht's poems that he sang needed to be sacrificed for a modern rap song. Hardcore gangbangers of rap are the only artistic style that Baal possesses in our contemporary society. Calgary is obviously not the heartbeat of rap music, but it has a huge following here from the indigenous

population to newly arrived immigrants. On a contrasting note I also wanted to show the closest resemblance to the original version I could by having one of the poems spoken as a folk epic in Brecht's native tongue of German; since the actor playing Baal spoke German this was not a problem. Using a dichotomy of poetic genre and language, I wanted to further instill Baal's ability to be relevant in a modern setting.

In order to have the actors understand the complexity of the script and be able to present it onstage they needed to experiment inside the world of the play. Exercises of dramatic style encompassing voice and movement were paramount in the actor's dissection of the text. As much time as possible was taken to play and experiment with meaning and development of character throughout the rehearsal process. The design was centered on a modern viewpoint, but still lent itself to the post-WWI time period and was timeless in its portrayal of nature. Through actor generated sound, tableau and individual scene construction the play was geared to work as an ensemble and to take big risks.

CHAPTER 4:

Critique on the Outcome of the Play

Trying to bring forth the artistry of the character Baal, and have the audience appreciate his talent of writing and delivering poetry was daunting to say the least. It is difficult for an audience to get past the violence against women, misogyny and overall debauchery. People have a hard time distancing themselves from Baal's negative aspects to appreciate his poetry. The most common response that I heard directly or indirectly was, "I really liked the staging and the design, but I hated the content." This is a play about a talented poet that does not fit into the stereotype of the romantic, sensitive and tender artist category; he is a poet searching for artistic enlightenment through pleasure and he is oblivious to the pain and torment his pleasure seeking creates: love him or hate him. There is no middle ground with this man and he expects none; he goes into death with open arms and laughing. Anything else would be going against the text and the play would fall flat. I tried throughout the whole rehearsal process to highlight and pull out Baal's artistic prowess, and found that the author only lets him shine so much before shoving your face again into his abusive ways. Brilliant, yet it is difficult to get the audience to respect his artistic merit. It irks the audience to see the young men and women idolize him like the deity; it brings to focus the behaviour of music and film stars of today. Is it a lack of tolerance that people have for Baal? The Christian prophet Elijah certainly did in his crusade to replace polytheistic worship with the belief in one god. And if we are correct in saying, no, this type of person should not be tolerated, why hide it? Violence against women and general misogyny is rife and happening amongst us daily. Should it not be addressed and shown, so we are consciously aware of it as a

society and prepared to battle it? This production did not glamorize Baal's vicious actions it simply showed his true colours.

The directing of counterpoint in this piece was the most alluring aspect; there were layers of activity. Counterpoint is a precarious objective. Placing a complexity of multiple areas of action into staging can often have distracting results. When does it start to move audience focus from its intended area? Performers in secondary positions of focus during scenes with large numbers of people on stage were asked to keep motions slower than natural, as it is my experience that quick movements are much more distracting than large and slow gestures; I sometimes found the kissing and fondling in Baal drawing attention away from the story of Baal's artistic journey, however, I risked that stolen focus to present the overt sexuality of the script. Using the actors to move the set pieces and ramps to create the multiple settings not only let the concept of nothing being hidden from the audience to prevail, but it generated quick scene changes that were crucial in not allowing the tempo of the pace to drag. With Baal I knew I was dealing with a story that some audience would find unclear, therefore, pace and rhythm became crucial attributes in retaining audience interest through predicted confusion.

Directing a play that is steeped in Nietzschean philosophy and voices unrest of post-WWI Germany can be confusing and overwhelming for an audience, even more so when the story's written structure does not flow evenly from one scene to the next and jumps from verse to prose. The layers of the text's complexity and my direction of utilizing two contrasting styles left some of the audience feeling distanced, and dare I say in an academic paper about Brecht--alienated. I ran a risk of not having a thorough understanding of the text by a portion of the audience. Some of the audience was already

distanced from the text at the onset of the play by factors contributing to its time period of creation and of elements connecting it to an unknown deity; I possibly added additional confusion through my director choice of stylistic jumping. How much did the brash young Brecht want his groundbreaking and shocking new work to be understood? This is certainly not the older Brecht who wrote for the masses and whom we normally associate with theatre; this is a play by a bourgeois young poet who wanted to rock the theatre world. I contemporized aspects of the writing and costumes to bring it closer to a modern audience. The cumulative amount of blood on Baal's body and the growing state of chaos on stage showed the progression of the play. I always knew that the comprehension of the text would be a challenge to the audience I was presenting it to. The audience's strongest connection was through the direct and indirect displays of sex and violence; this was the universal that everybody could understand regardless of their position in the hierarchy of class. Where I think there was the least audience comprehension was through the connection with the deity Baal.

The text makes subtle and often extremely vague allusions to the ancient deity Baal. If I had not done research on the god, I would have missed almost all of the references. The text's frequent association to cattle is aimed at the fertility aspect of the deity and was transformed on stage by actor voice and movement; the canned sounds and lines in the text talking of rain show the connection with fertility through the lifeblood of a river. Brecht parodies the fertility of the rivers by having people drown in them, but they are connected to the deity nonetheless. I chose not to show the character Baal as a god, but often wonder what the show would look like if I did. Bentley, in The Brecht Commentaries, suggests that Baal has a well-established connection with ancient

folklore: “There is enough here to guarantee that Baal will sooner or later be interpreted wholly in terms of myth and ritual” (130). The lack of a strong connection with the deity in my direction of the play was a considered choice. I chose not to because I consider the deity a framework that Brecht used to create this poet. This framework is deeply part of the poet Baal’s actions, because this deity and poet were both dedicated in their search for pleasure.

Baal’s structurally eclectic presentation of an amoral poet searching for artistic enlightenment through pleasure, who eventually dies from this excess of pleasure, is a story worth telling. The relevancy to a modern audience lies in the similarities of Baal’s non-status-quo behaviour and the explicit conduct by some of today’s avant-garde artists, who are representing the marginalized and hardcore in their search for a greater cultivation of their artistry and gratification. Baal may have pushed some audience out of their comfort zone in regards to content and left confusion in clarity of the story being told, but it reinforced societal problems still prevalent in contemporary society and it did not bore. Action and creative verse kept the audience focused if not enthralled. The student performers were required to do work on a complex script that challenged them, and I think they were successful. My most notable negative criticism of the performers would be their failure to have created more distinct differences between their multiple characters; it sometimes felt that progress we made in a rehearsal would not be carried over to the next rehearsal, and would have to be completely revisited again. However, I take responsibility for this as well. I would have to say the most difficult aspect of directing this piece was to pull audience focus towards Baal’s artistry and away from his debauchery, which displays his amoral behaviour. The audience seemed to be more

focused on the poet's naughty actions and spectacle of dramatic style, and I can understand their focal choices; Brecht was shoving the violent action and stylistic aesthetics into the audience's face, and through direction I let the play bring it out. Bringing Baal to production has been a challenging and exciting experience, an experience that allowed me to play creatively in a collaborative setting, and in an environment that encouraged taking risks.

WORKS CITED

- Bentley, Eric. The Brecht Commentaries. New York: Grove Press, 1987.
- Brecht, Bertolt. Bertolt Brecht: Collected Plays – Volume One: (1-58). Ed. Ralph Manheim and John Willett. Trans. William E. Smith and Ralph Manheim. New York: Vintage (Random House), 1971.
- Bronner, Leah. The Stories of Elijah and Elisha. Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1968.
- Fuegi, John. Bertolt Brecht: Chaos According to Plan. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- . Brecht and Company: Sex, Politics, and the Making of the Modern Drama. New York: Grove Press, 1994.
- Kaplerud, Arvid S. Baal in the Ras Sharma Texts. Copenhagen: G.E.C. GAD, 1952.
- Kipling, Rudyard. Early Verse by Rudyard Kipling. Ed. Andrew Rutherford. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.
- Kuhns, David F. German Expressionist Theatre. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Lyons, Charles R. "Bertolt Brecht's Baal: The Structure of Images." Modern Drama 8 (1995): 311-323.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich W. Thus Spake Zarathustra. Trans. A. Tille. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1958.
- . Twilight of the Idols. 1954. Ed. and Trans. by Walter Kaufmann. The Great Books Foundation Vol. 8. Chicago: The Great Books Foundation, 1966.
- Pascal, Roy. Introduction. Thus Spake Zarathustra. Trans. A. Tille. London: J.M. Dent &

Sons Ltd., 1958.

Sokel, Walter, H. Introduction. An Anthology of German Expressionist Drama. Ed.

Walter H. Sokel. New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1963. iv-xxxii.

Völker, Klaus. Brecht: A Biography. Trans. John Nowell. New York: The Seabury Press, 1978.

WORKS CONSULTED

Abdulla, Sara. Rev. of Baal by Bertolt Brecht. London Theatre Review 15 (1995): 1080.

Bathrick, David. "Patricide or Re-generation?: Brecht's Baal and Roundheads in the GDR." Theatre Journal Dec 1987: 434-447.

Bentley, Eric. "Bertolt Brecht's First Play." Introduction. Baal, A Man's a Man and The Elephant Calf. By Bertolt Brecht. Ed. Eric Bentley. Trans. Eric Bentley and Martin Esslin. New York: Grove Press, 1964. 3-14.

Berghaus, Günter. Avant-Garde: Live Events and Electronic Technologies. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

---. Theatre, Performance and the Historical Avant-Garde. New York: Palgrave MacMilliam, 2005.

Bertolt Brecht. Dir. Hansgunther Heyme. Inter-Nationes, 1998.

Billington, Michael. Rev. of Baal, by Bertolt Brecht. London Theatre Review 11 (1991): 994.

---. Rev. of Baal, by Bertolt Brecht. London Theatre Record 15 (1995): 1080.

Blumberg, Phillip. "The Crisis of Association: Brecht's Baal." Yale/Theatre Winter 1975: 44-50.

Brecht, Bertolt. Baal, A Man's a Man and The Elephant Calf. Ed. Eric Bentley. Trans.

- Eric Bentley and Martin Esslin. New York: Grove Press, 1964.
- . Bertolt Brecht: Poems & Songs from the Plays. Ed. and trans. John Willett and Ralph Manheim. London: Methuen, 1990.
- . Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic. Ed. and trans. John Willet. New York: Hill and Wang, 1992.
- Cooley, John K. Baal, Christ, and Mohammed: Religion and Revolution in North Africa. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.
- Darvell, Michael. Rev. of Baal, by Bertolt Brecht. London Theatre Review 15 (1995): 1080.
- Eddershaw, Margaret. Performing Brecht: Forty Years of British Performances. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Einem, Gottfried von. Caspar Neher. Hanover: Friedrich, 1966.
- Farrell, Joseph. Rev. of Baal, by Bertolt Brecht. London Theatre Record 11 (1991): 993.
- Faust. Dir. F.W. Murnau. Facets Videos, 1926.
- Fleming, Daniel E. The Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar: A Window on Ancient Syrian Religion. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1992.
- Goncalves de Silva, M. Helena. Character, Ideology and Symbolism in the Plays of Wedekind, Sternheim, Kaiser, Toller and Brecht. London: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 1985.
- Gruitt, Paul and Sara Selwood. Artists in the Theatre: Expressionism, Dada, Purism on Stage. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Gainford Associates, 1986.
- Hampton, Wilborn. "Finding the Beats in Brecht, In Different Time and Place." Rev of Baal, by Bertolt Brecht. The New York Times 12 August 2000: B7. Proquest.

25 October 2005. <<http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca>>.

Kingston, Jeremy. Rev of Baal, by Bertolt Brecht. London Theatre Record 11 (1991): 995.

Kriemhilde's Revenge. Dir. Fritz Lang. Republic Pictures, 1924.

Kuhns, David. The Synthetic Actor: A Theoretical Approach to German Expressionist Performance. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI, 1990.

Lyons, Charles R. "Bertolt Brecht: The Despair and the Polemic." Modern Drama 8 (1968): 311-23.

M. Dir. Fritz Lang. Aikman Archive, 1931.

Macaulay, Alastair. Rev. of Baal, by Bertolt Brecht. London Theatre Record 11 (1991): 994.

McTeague, James H. Playwrights and Acting: Acting Methodologies for Brecht, Ionesco, Pinter, and Shepard. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994.

Metropolis. Dir. Fritz Lang. UFA Films, 1926.

Mettinger, Tryggve N.D. The Riddle of Resurrection: "Dying and Rising Gods" in the Ancient Near East. Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2001.

Mitter, Shomitt. Systems of Rehearsal: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Growtowski, and Brook. London: Routledge, 2000.

Murdin, Lynda. Rev. of Baal, by Bertolt Brecht. London Theatre Record 6 (1986): 463.

Night – Max Beckmann. Dir. Unknown. Inter-Nationes, 1984.

Nolle, Eckehart. Expressionist Theatre. Munich: Klein and Volbert, 1977.

Nosferatu. Dir. F.W. Murnau. Republic Pictures, 1922.

Pandora's Box. Dir. Fritz Lang. Janus Collection, 1928.

- Rainbird, Sean. Max Beckmann. New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2003.
- Rimbaud, Arthur. Arthur Rimbaud: Selected Poems and Letters. Trans. Jeremy Harding and John Sturrock. London: Penguin Group, 2004.
- Rouse, John. Brecht and the West German Theatre: The Practice and Politics of Interpretation. London: UMI Research Press, 1989.
- Say, Rosemary. Rev. of Baal, by Bertolt Brecht. London Theatre Record 6 (1986): 463.
- Siegfried. Dir. Fritz Lang. Republic Pictures, 1924.
- Skrine, Peter. Hauptmann, Wedekind and Schnitzler. London: Macmillan, 1989.
- Smith, Mark S. The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume I. New York: E.J. Brill, 1994.
- Spencer, Charles. Rev. of Baal, by Bertolt Brecht. London Theatre Record 11 (1991): 995.
- Taylor, Paul. Rev. of Baal, by Bertolt Brecht. London Theatre Review 11 (1991): 994.
- The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari. Dir. Robert Weine. Decla-Bioskop, 1919.
- Thomson, Peter, ed. The Cambridge Companion to Brecht. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Verlaine, Paul. Paul Verlaine: Selected Poems. Trans. C.F. MacIntyre. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1948.
- Villon, Francois. Complete Poems. Ed. and trans. Barbara N. Sargent-Baur. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994.
- Wedekind, Frank. Frank Wedekind: Four Major Plays. Trans. Carl R. Mueller. Hanover, New Hampshire: Smith and Kraus, 2000.
- . Frank Wedekind: Four Major Plays - Volume II. Trans. Carl R. Mueller. Hanover, New Hampshire: Smith and Kraus, 2002.

Weisstein, Ulrich. "The Lonely Baal: Brecht's First Play as a Parody of Hanns Johst's Der Einsame." Modern Drama 13 (1990): 284-303.

Willett, John. Caspar Neher: Brecht's Designer. London: Methuen, 1986.

---. Expressionism. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970.

When the Fire Dances Between Two Poles: Mary Wigman. Dir. Allegra Fuller Snyder. Princeton Book Co., 1991.