Didactic Fragmentation in "Scenes from the Big Picture" (2003) by Owen McCafferty

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Abstract: Brecht's dramatic theory helps demonstrate that the contours of contemporary Northern Irish drama have been reshaped. In this respect, Owen McCafferty's play Scenes from the Big Picture has Neo-Brechtian resonances. The audience is presented with fragments of lives of people, bits and pieces of a whole picture. This play exemplifies Brecht's idea of a didactic play in so far as the audience is called to learn about the Northern Irish Troubles from the play through the device of fragmentation: the uneven background of McCafferty's play - i.e. the Troubles - is peopled with traumatised individuals, proportionally fragmented. The play is built on fragmentation to mirror the fragmented environment as truthfully as possible, but it also sheds light to tensions between disruption and continuity giving the play a dialectical dimension that enables it to become didactic. This didactic dimension could not be completely reached without the intervention of the spectators and some awareness on the actors' parts.

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Owen McCafferty's wiki: Owen McCafferty (born 1961) is a playwright from Northern Ireland. Early life Born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, McCafferty in 1961 he was brought up in London from the age of 1 until aged 10 when his parents returned to Belfast. His play Scenes from the Big Picture, originally produced in 2003 at the National Theatre in London, earned him the John Whiting Award, the Evening Standard's Charles Wintour Award for New Playwriting and the Meyer-Whitworth Award. It was the first time any playwright had won all three awards in one year. McCafferty has also adapted J P Miller's Days of Wine and Roses but only used the skeleton of the original. McCafferty's writing features the language and complexities, both comic and tragic, of Belfast life.