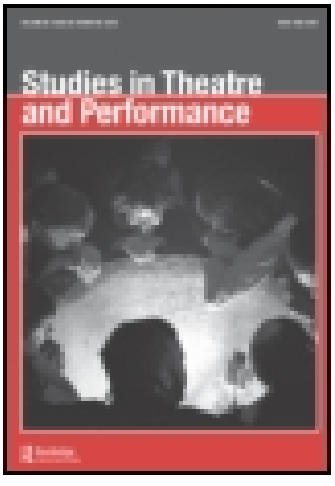

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Revisiting Brecht: preparing *Galileo* for production

Michael Wilson

Abstract

The article describes the preparation of a new translation of Brecht's Galileo*, and the issues that arose in the practical process of retranslating this onto the stage. The research imperative of the project was to investigate the questions that arise when exploring epic theatre in a postmodern context. The pedagogical aim was to engage undergraduate students as fully as possible in the complexities of Brecht's poetics.* Galileo *is Brecht's most reworked text, and also one of his least performed plays in Britain.*

Introduction

In March 1999, twenty-four students from the University of Glamorgan mounted a production of Brecht's *Galileo* (*Leben des Galilei*), the culmination of a seven-month project on epic theatre which had begun in the previous September, in the year of the playwright's centenary. The project had both research and pedagogical imperatives and, although at its outset it was the research considerations that had been deemed most central to the enterprise, it would be the pedagogical issues that acquired an enhanced prominence as the project progressed and the student ensemble took an increasingly active role in determining the work's direction.

In research terms the project was conceived as a serious exploration into the practical realities of producing epic theatre at the end of the twentieth century, in what many would argue is a post-Brechtian world, or at least a world in which Brecht the modernist must be reassessed in postmodernist terms (Friedrich 1999). The pedagogical aims of the project arose primarily out of my own experience of teaching Brecht to undergraduate students, many of whom had assumed that epic theatre was merely a theatre without props, costumes, or indeed a need for much rehearsal. When faced with the very real complexities of Brecht's poetics, some developed an antagonism towards anything they perceived as 'Brechtian', whilst others acquired a desire to engage more fully with his politics and theories than is normally possible within the course of teaching. Certainly, those students who volunteered to take part in what was a strictly extracurricular activity were motivated as much by the desire to explore the theory and practice of epic theatre as they were by the desire to be part of a major production.

It was always planned that *Galileo* should enjoy an uncharacteristically long rehearsal process as this was to be the most important aspect of the project, at least from a pedagogical viewpoint. Whilst the production of the play would provide a useful focus for the work, the project was primarily built upon a teaching and learning agenda (both mine and the students')

and would be ultimately evaluated against criteria relating to that. It was also my intention to produce a new translation of the text appropriate to the needs of our project and it was envisaged that this should be produced alongside the early rehearsals (up until December) so that the translating was integrated into the project as a whole.

Galileo: the text

Before giving an analytical account of the process, it might first be worth contextually and historically locating Brecht's own work on the play and our own reasons for choosing it as the focus for our project.

Leben des Galilei, in spite of its status within the Brecht canon as one of the major exile plays, remains one of the least performed, at least in Britain. It is also - perhaps not coincidentally - one of his longest. In addition, it is Brecht's most reworked text, existing as it does in three versions (two in German and one in English) that were written between 1938 and 1955. The play was still being revised when Brecht died of heart failure in Berlin in August 1956.

Briefly, the three versions of the play are:

1. The 'Danish' version - written in 1938 and premiered in Zurich: this is a full-length version of the play and concentrates on the struggle between Galileo and the authorities. Significantly, it characterizes Galileo in a sympathetic light, a hero whose recantation is a wily move to enable him to complete the *Discorsi*.
2. The 'American' version - written during 1944-47 in English with Charles Laughton: this was premiered in 1947 in Los Angeles under the title *Galileo* in a production directed by Joseph Losey. It is a much shorter text than the 'Danish' version and renames some of the incidental characters. It also makes far more extensive use of the *Spruchbänder* and includes a new English-language version of the ballad scene (Scene 9 in the 'Danish' and 'American' versions, Scene 10 in the 'Berlin' version). Furthermore, it was revised after the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima to make Galileo a far more contradictory character. No longer is his recantation an act of *Realpolitik*, but one of cowardice, and the issue of scientific morality is given far greater emphasis.[1]
3. The 'Berlin' version - written during 1953-56 for the Berliner Ensemble and premiered posthumously in 1957: this is the longest version of the play and restores much of the material from the 'Danish' version, whilst further developing the contradictory side to Galileo's character.

The reasons why such an ambitious and complex text was chosen for this particular project are manifold. On one level at least, the play is about *change*, an exploration of the concept first articulated in *He Who Said No* (*Der Neinsager*) as the freedom 'to consider each new situation afresh' ('*in jeder neuen Lage neu nachzudenken*') (Brecht 1966: 49); a questioning which was 'the first step [...] in effecting concrete social change' (Lyons 1999: 274). At the same time, change was inherent in the very way that Brecht approached the writing of the play, and as our brief was to revisit and, if necessary, to subsequently revise our approach to epic theatre in a contem-

1 Interestingly, the Berliner Ensemble centenary production in 1998 made extensive use of the 'American' version, not least for its conciseness (See Lyons 1999).

porary context, the ability to work from three different versions of the play seemed both helpful and appropriate.

The three different versions produced by Brecht clearly indicate that his attitude to Galileo and the cause of scientific progress changed during the course of the war. In the earliest pre-war version, the issue is clear-cut: Galileo is the champion of knowledge and truth, finally outwitting the fascistic oppression of the Catholic Church. It is an ultimately optimistic play, which predicts with a Marxist sense of historical inevitability a world in which science is an egalitarian and emancipatory force, employed for the benefit of all. Within a matter of only a few years, the actions of scientists in Nazi Germany and, most significantly, the events in Hiroshima in August 1945, caused Brecht to think the situation afresh. In the 'Notes to the American version' ('*Anmerkungen zur amerikanischen Fassung*'), Brecht wrote:

> Overnight the biography of the father of modern physics read differently. The horrific effect of the great bomb cast the conflict between Galileo and the authorities of his day in a new, sharper light.
> *(Von heute bis morgen las sich die Biographie des Begründers der neuen Physik anders. Der infernalische Effekt der Großen Bombe stellte den Konflikt des Galilei mit der Obrigkeit seiner Zeit in ein neues, schärferes Licht.)*
>
> (Hecht 1981 55)

For Brecht, this sharper light served to illuminate the politics of the history of science, an understanding of which is articulated by Galileo in Scene 13 of my translation,[2] when he declares:

> I believe that the ultimate aim of science must be to lighten the burden of human existence. If scientists are controlled by self-interested rulers and are happy to acquire knowledge for its own sake, then science will be crippled and your new machines will only lead to greater oppression.

In a draft for a foreword to the play, Brecht developed the idea yet further, this time also pointing a finger at those scientists who divorce themselves from the political context in which they work:

> The bourgeois single out science from the scientist's consciousness, setting it up as an island of independence so as to be able in practice to interweave it with *their* politics, *their* economics, *their* ideology. The research scientist's object is 'pure' research; the product of that research is not so pure. The formula $E=mc^2$ is conceived of as eternal, not tied to anything. Hence other people can do the tying: suddenly the city of Hiroshima became very short-lived. The scientists are claiming the irresponsibility of machines. (Brecht 1995: 196)
> *(Die Bourgeoisie isoliert im Bewußtsein des Wissenschaftlers die Wissenschaft, stellt sie als autarke Insel him, um sie praktisch mit ihrer Politik, ihrer Wirtschaft, ihrer Ideologie verflechten zu können. Das Ziel des Forschers ist »reine« Forschung, das Produkt der Forschung ist weniger rein. Die Formel*

2 We omitted the plague scenes (5a and 5b in the 'Berlin' Version) in our production and so this appears in Scene 14 in the Willett translation.

E=mc² ist ewig gedacht, an nichts gebunden. So können andere die Bindungen vornehmen: die Stadt Hiroschima ist plötzlich sehr kurzlebig geworden. Die Wissenschaftler nehmen für sich in Anspruch die Unverantwortlichkeit der Maschinen.)

(Hecht 1981: 57)

Ultimately, Brecht was a political writer and, since early adulthood, a committed Marxist. Despite the best efforts of many Western critics and commentators to draw a veil over this aspect of his character (Needle and Thomson 1981: 45-55), an understanding of his plays relies on at least an acknowledgement of this simple reality. As Astrid Herhoffer says, any attempt 'to "liberate" his works from their political intention [...] are doomed to failure, as Brecht's texts would then be distorted out of all recognition' (Herhoffer 1998: 214). Needle and Thomson correctly assert that Brecht's Marxism was not of the dogmatic kind but 'a questioning, a refusal to accept anything as fixed' (Needle and Thomson 1981: 79), so placing Brecht's political beliefs at the very centre of any reading of *Galileo*. In the words of Robert Lyons, 'a non-political production of a political author is the worst kind of insult: it's boring' (Lyons 1999: 272).

It was the political nature of Brecht's theatre and *Galileo* in particular which provided one of the key challenges (and one of the key justifications) for the project, namely, how can a student body that has become largely *disengaged* from organized politics satisfactorily *engage* with one of the greatest socialist plays of the twentieth century?[3] It is probably fair to say that different students approached the politics of the play in different ways, as will be outlined later, but it was perhaps serendipity which meant that the project coincided with the emergence into the public arena of the debate around genetically modified food. This was a political issue with which the students were more willing to engage and, moreover, which dealt with the very issue of the political consequences of scientific progress that lies at the heart of *Galileo*. Not only did it provide many of the students with a 'way in' to a politics that had previously failed to engage them, but it also gave our choice of play an unexpected contemporary edge.

Translation

John Willett goes to the heart of the problem of translating Brecht when he warns of the dangers of giving too great an emphasis on 'playability': 'It has got to be delivered, yes, and an actor has got to speak it. But what seem like awkwardness and unfamiliarities may be awkward and unfamiliar to German actors too ...' (Willett 1998: 261). Willett is referring to the way that Brecht will often use the concept of *Verfremdung* in language, drawing our critical attention to key words or phrases by making them seem unfamiliar. Willett is right to flag up this crucial aspect of Brecht's writing and his solution is to render a literal translation.

> ... the translator should render the text as Brecht wrote it before any changes are made. [...] The reader must have what Brecht wrote, not what his translator thinks he ought to have written. [...] We aren't interested in the translator's ideas but in Brecht's: if these are unclear or

3 I am here indebted to Deidre Heddon for drawing my attention to this issue at a seminar I gave at the University of Exeter at the very beginning of the project in November 1998.

> ambiguous it is for the reader, not the translator, to sort them out. (Willett 1998: 261)

There is much to commend in Willett's approach, not least because the history of Brecht translation and interpretation is characterized by a simplification and convenient massaging of his poetics and politics in order to less problematically fit a pro-capitalist cultural context and to conform to the theatrical orthodoxies of the time (Lefevere 1982: 9–13). What is immediately clear, however, is that Willett sees himself writing for a 'readership' and in doing so, he ignores the fact he is translating a *play* where 'the written code is one code, one system in a complex set of codes that interact together in performance' (Bassnett-McGuire 1985: 94). As early as 1921, Walter Benjamin had, according to Patrick Primavesi, already established that 'theatre can't be reduced to a more or less appropriate translation of a *text*.[4] The various features and qualities of a performance go far beyond the rendering of a writer's intention' (Primavesi 1999: 54).

But Willett's concern is for the reader, and not the performer, of the dramatic text and his own translation[5] of *Leben des Galilei* (1995) veers towards both the literal and the literary. In contrast to Benjamin, he sees the translator as little more than a conduit for Brecht's ideas, denying him/her any stake in the interpretation of those ideas and the making of meaning. He assumes a position that declares meaning as fixed, unalterable and firmly in the hands of the writer, what Bassnett-McGuire calls 'Anglo-Saxon textual imperialism' (Bassnett-McGuire 1985: 88) and which is, according to Lefevere, based upon a belief in 'the sacred character of the text' (Lefevere 1982: 4). A translator, however, cannot but intervene in the creative process, any less than the director or the actor. As Lefevere rightly points out, translation is merely another kind of 'refraction', an interpretative intervention to enable audiences or readers to make sense of material in their own cultural terms. The activities of editors and critics, as well as actors and directors, are further examples of refraction and, therefore, not only is refraction integral to performance, but also to translation, where a work is transposed from one cultural, historical and political context into another.

In his championing of the literal translation, Willett would seem to be denying us the opportunity to reinterpret the play for our own times, a consideration which was not only central to our project, because of the 'special need for the continued retranslation or updating of theatre texts, where patterns of speech are in a continuous process of change' (Bassnett-McGuire 1985: 89), but one that Peter Hacks argues is fundamentally Brechtian:

> Brecht's reality was the reality of the first half of the twentieth century. But our reality is different; our methods must appear to be different from Brecht, if they are to be Brechtian. Like every achievement of the human mind, Brecht's achievement is historical. It is both transitory and permanent. It can be developed only by negating it, not prolonging it. (Patterson 1994: 279)

4 My emphasis.

5 This is arguably the standard English language version of the play and the only one, apart from Howard Brenton's translation for the National in 1981, that is generally available.

To be fair to Willett, his loyalties are primarily to Brecht the writer and theorist, rather than Brecht the theatre-maker. His translation was produced within the context of an English language version of Brecht's complete dramatic works, where a more literal translation is arguably more appropriate. In spite of Willett's protestations that no textual concessions should be made to the actors, however, Brecht's own experiences as a director and a translator were ruled by the maxim that 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating' and he was not opposed to making textual changes in the interests of the production. Brecht never forgot that he was writing for the theatre and that all the theory in the world counts for nothing, if it only produces bad theatre. If *Galileo* is a celebration of 'the Age of Doubt', the refusal to accept anything as fixed, then the same must go for the text, for to 'honour Brecht is to honour the revolutionary spirit' (Lyons 1999: 273). For our own project it seemed that a new translation, which carefully balanced any deliberate awkwardness of language with performative considerations and the needs of an ensemble of student actors unpractised in epic theatre, was the most appropriate solution. As Susan Bassnett-McGuire argues, 'all kinds of factors other than the linguistic are involved in the case of [translating] theatre texts', because 'a theatre text exists in a dialectical relationship with the performance of that text' (Bassnett-McGuire 1985: 87).

Willett, in his quest for accuracy, in producing his translation of the 'Berlin' version of the play, completely ignores the fact that Brecht himself produced an English-language version of the play and had clear ideas about the purpose of translation, which 'deconstruct the traditional patterns by which translation theories usually reflect the communication of intentions and messages' (Primavesi 1999: 54). The 'American' version is in many respects a very different play from the 'Berlin' version, which one must accept is the latest and most complete version and yet, it would seem perverse not to at least consider how Brecht himself tackled certain problems of translation. If the translator's task is to interpret and represent Brecht's *theatrical* intentions or even, to use a perhaps more appropriate term, his *Gestus*, then much can be learned from how he himself approached translation.[6] In addition, the American version was produced in collaboration with Charles Laughton, with the latter providing an invaluable contribution as both a native English speaker and an actor. Indeed, my translation was produced with all *three* versions of the play on my desk and Willett's translation to hand for checking the accuracy of my own German. Along with the input of the acting ensemble, our translation was produced in a not entirely dissimilar collaborative fashion, an approach named by Bassnett-McGuire as 'co-operative translation' (Bassnett-McGuire 1985: 91) and in which Brecht discovered 'a special productivity deriving from the interrelations between translating and rehearsing' (Primavesi 1999: 56).

If one accepts that Willett's intention is not primarily to produce texts for production, then his quest for linguistic accuracy is a noble one. Nevertheless, the problems with his approach are perhaps best exemplified in the very first scene of the play. Here is Willett's translation of the opening exchange between Galileo and Andrea:

6 For Brecht's extensive notes on his work with Laughton on both the translation and production of *Galileo*, see Hecht 1981: 77-111.

Galileo (*washing down to the waist, puffing and cheerful*): Put that milk on the table, and don't you shut any of those books.
Andrea: Mother says we must pay the milkman. Or he'll start making a circle around our house, Mr Galilei.
Galileo: Describing a circle, you mean, Andrea.
Andrea: Whichever you like. If we don't pay the bill he'll start describing a circle round us, Mr Galilei.
Galileo: Whereas when Mr Cambione the bailiff comes straight for us what sort of distance between two points is he going to pick?
Andrea (*grinning*): The shortest.
Galileo: Right. I've got something for you. Look behind the star charts.

(Andrea rummages behind the star charts and brings out a big wooden model of the Ptolemaic system.)

Andrea: What is it?
Galileo: That's an armillary sphere. It's a contraption to show how the planets move around the earth, according to our forefathers.
Andrea: How?
Galileo: Let's examine it. Start at the beginning. Description?

(Brecht 1995: 5-6)

Willett has produced an admirably accurate literary translation of the following piece of text as it appears in both the early 'Danish' and the final 'Berlin' versions:

Galilei (*sich den Oberkörper waschend, prustend und fröhlich*): Stell die Milch auf den Tisch, aber klapp kein Buch zu.
Andrea: Mutter sagt, wir müssen den Milchmann bezahlen. Sonst macht er bald einen Kreis um unser Haus, Herr Galilei.
Galilei: Es heißt: er beschreibt einen Kreis, Andrea.
Andrea: Wie Sie wollen. Wenn wir nicht bezahlen, dann beschreibt er einen Kreis um uns, Herr Galilei.
Galilei: Während der Gerichtvollzieher, Herr Cambione, schnurgerade auf uns zu kommt, indem er was für eine Strecke zwischen zwei Punkten wählt?
Andrea (*grinsend*): Die kürzeste.
Galilei: Gut. Ich habe was für dich. Sieh hinter den Sterntafeln nach.

(Andrea fischt hinter den Sterntafeln ein großes hölzernes Modell des ptolemäischen Systems hervor.)

Andrea: Was ist das?
Galilei: Das ist ein Astrolab; das Ding zeigt, wie sich die Gestirne um die Erde bewegen, nach Ansicht dr Alten.
Andrea: Wie?
Galilei: Untersuchen wir es. Zuerst das Erste: Beschreibung.

(Brecht 1998: 285)

The sense of the scene revolves around a joke and, significantly, a mathe-

matical joke. Dramatically speaking, it establishes both the scientific/mathematical context in which the action takes place, whilst also emphasizing Galileo's good humour and lust for life at the beginning of the play. What Brecht has done is appropriate the German phrase 'einen Bogen um etwas machen', meaning 'to avoid something' or, literally 'to make a curve around something', changing it to 'einen Kreis um etwas machen'.[7] This allows Galileo to correct Andrea with the proper mathematical term, 'einen Kreis beschreiben' - 'to *describe* a circle'.

The joke may not be a particularly strong one, but at least it is recognizable to the German speaker. In English there is no equivalent phrase and at best the joke comes across as obscure and clumsy. The translation of jokes, and especially those which are linguistic in nature is a notoriously problematic task, and one that Brecht and Laughton seemingly recognized. Unable to find a satisfactory translation, it would appear that they decided to abandon the formula in favour of a completely different approach. This is how the play opens in the 'American' version:

(Galileo's scantily furnished study. It is morning and Galileo is washing himself upstage R. Andrea, son of his housekeeper, Angelica Sarti, enters L carrying a big astronomical model. Comes to bottom of steps, puts model down on floor and stands looking at it.)

Galileo: Where did you get that thing?
Andrea: A coachman brought it.
Galileo: Who sent it?
Andrea: It said 'From the Court of Naples' on the box.
Galileo: I don't want their stupid presents. Illuminated manuscripts, a statue of Hercules, the size of an elephant - they never send money.

The boy, Andrea Sarti, wheedles a free lesson from the great Galileo by being interested.

Andrea: But isn't this an astronomical instrument, Mr Galilei?
Galileo: That is an antique too. An expensive toy.
Andrea: What's it for?
Galileo: It is a map of the sky, according to the wise men of ancient Greece. We will try and sell it to the university. They still teach it there.
Andrea: How does it work, Mr Galilei?
Galileo: It's complicated.
Andrea (*walks around the astrolabe before speaking*): I think I could understand it.
Galileo (*interested*): Maybe. Let's begin at the beginning. Description!

(Brecht, 1998: 143)

Clearly Brecht and Laughton so firmly rejected the idea of including a non-joke within their English-language version of the play that not only did they adopt a completely different opening, but also significantly altered the initial relationship between Galileo and Andrea. Here Galileo is not the keen teacher trying to engage his pupil's interest, but rather more reluctant and Andrea tricks Galileo into helping him satisfy his curiosity. The fact that Brecht chose to reinstate the original opening for the 'Berlin' version

7 I am grateful to my colleague, Katja Krebs, for helping me to unpick the linguistic subtleties of this sentence.

would seem to indicate that his preference was for the opening exchange, yet it would also suggest that his first priority was to have effective dialogue. My own strategy was to try and steer a steady course between both versions, preserving the relationship between teacher and pupil, whilst at the same time producing a dialogue that actually made sense. I came up with the following:

Galileo (*heartily washing his torso*): Put the milk down on the table, but don't touch any of the books.
Andrea: Mother says that we must pay the milkman, otherwise he'll stop delivering.
Galileo: At least that'll be one less delivery to worry about. (*Pause*) If Senor Cambione, the bailiff, were to pay us a visit, walking in a straight line between his house and ours, which route would he take?
Andrea (*grinning*): The shortest!
Galileo: Good. I've got something to show you. Have a look behind the star charts.

(From behind the star charts Andrea pulls out a large wooden model of the Ptolemaic System.)

Andrea: What is it?
Galileo: The latest delivery! Another stupid present from 'The Court of Naples'! Of course, they never send any money.
Andrea: But it's an astronomical instrument, isn't it, Senor Galileo?
Galileo: More of an antique, an expensive toy. Never mind, we can always sell it to the University. They may still have some use for it.
Andrea: Why?
Galileo: It shows how the planets all move around the Earth according to ancient wisdom.
Andrea: Show me!
Galileo: Very well, describe it for me!

With this example I do not mean to imply that the task of translating *Galileo* was a constant round of tortuous decision-making - for much of the time it was far more of a pedestrian process - but it does indicate the tensions which the translator must try to resolve between the playwright's literary and theatrical intentions. It is an issue which has greater significance with Brecht because of his occasional use of unusual phrasing in order to draw attention to a particular moment's political significance.

Galileo in rehearsal

The rehearsal process, which lasted around six months, had three main functions:

- to test and refine the translation;
- to explore key aspects of epic theatre and epic acting;
- to prepare a production of the play.

In this section I will concentrate primarily on the second of these.

For the student actor who has been brought up to equate the notion of 'good' acting with Stanislavsky's System or Strasberg's Method, epic acting provides a fierce challenge. The notion of believability, which is a key criterion for both the System and the Method, cannot be so readily applied to standards of epic acting. Brecht is not concerned with hoodwinking the audience into seeing what is *not* there, but rather illuminating for the audience what *is* there, but which they cannot easily see. As Thomson asserts:

> Transparency, an absence of actorly self-protectiveness, was important to Brecht. He had no wish to bamboozle the audience. On the contrary, the task of the actor was to draw the audience's attention to everything worth noticing.
>
> (Thomson 1997: 73)

Of course, central to achieving this is the notion of *Vefremdung*, whereby the familiar (and therefore unnoticeable) is rendered unfamiliar (and therefore noticeable) by a series of devices (*Effekte*). However, the idea of transparency goes to the very heart of epic acting, demanding that the actor does not 'become' the character, but 'shows' the character. The central idea here is that of *Gestus*, which Thomson describes as 'the key concept in Brechtian actor training and the defining quality of a truly Brechtian performance' (Thomson 2000: 109). Nevertheless, it is a term 'that Brecht himself used ... so loosely' (Thomson 2000: 109) and has been the centre of much discussion by scholars, but is generally taken to mean the socially and historically determined attitude that a character has towards his/her situation and/or the other characters, and the attitude that an actor adopts towards his/her character (see Weber 1994: 182). In this sense, 'the basic *Gestus* [of the actor] is the *Gestus* of showing' (Thomson 1997: 68).

Furthermore, Brecht required his actors to adopt a position of enquiry to the text itself; this questioning, what Lyons calls 'the conscious engagement of the actor on an intellectual plane' (Lyons 1999: 258), was at the heart of the rehearsal process. As Thomson says: 'Rehearsal provided an opportunity to interrogate the text, never to polish performance to the point where it rendered the text inconspicuous' (Thomson 1997: 24) and that the 'text was something for the rehearsing actors to think about. Its effective mediation was a matter for general interest, a subject for discussion' (Thomson 1997: 36). For us, this was the most obvious route into the concept of epic theatre. Whilst the students might have had some difficulty in grasping the principles of Brechtian acting in an abstract manner, the task of approaching a text practically in order to interrogate it is something at which they are very skilled and lies at the heart, I would guess, of much practice undertaken in university drama departments. Whilst Peter Brook in *The Empty Space* credits Brecht with the invention of the idea of the 'intelligent actor' (Brook 1972: 85), it is, almost by definition, a concept that underpins much of our work.

I would not pretend that this attitude of enquiry turned the students into consummate epic actors overnight, but it facilitated an exploration of a number of concepts and allowed the students to retain a degree of objectivity to text and character. In the first instance, it enabled the students to

more easily locate moments of *Verfremdung* within the text, both by means of discussing the text and by performing it. More importantly, it allowed the actors to better explore the *Gestus* of their character. The Marxist concept that behaviour is determined by the social circumstances in which a character finds him/herself, as opposed to a character's psychological make-up, is the reason that Thomson calls *Gestus* the 'social heart of an episode' (Thomson 2000: 105), with the emphasis very much upon 'social', and it is through debate (both verbal and physical) around the social and political implications of text and action that an appropriate *Gestus* can be found. It is a small, but significant, matter that at the beginning of the rehearsal period students were asking about the 'motivation' for their character's behaviour, whereas after a rehearsal process that had included a number of such debates (particularly in the early stages), they began to ask what it was that determined that their characters behaved in a certain way, or even what was the purpose of a certain action. The inevitable consequence of adopting such a *Gestus* is the separation of actor from character, a key concept in epic acting, designed to lead the audience towards its own interrogative stance. If the actor is to continually question his/her character's actions, then 'to lose the self in the part is to surrender responsibility for the play' (Thomson 1997: 72). It becomes necessary to step outside the character and for the audience to see this separation in order to adopt its own *Gestus* of enquiry.

This attitude of enquiry was also central to an exploration of the play's structure. As previously mentioned, *Galileo* is an extremely long play, even with the omission of the plague scenes, and it is important that the play retains its episodic nature, to preserve

> a principle of epic construction - 'one thing after another' rather than 'one thing out of another'. It is important, if we are to avoid the trap of taking the narrative for granted, that each element in it should be separately noticeable. If the incidents flow too smoothly from and into each other they are liable to appear inevitable. (Thomson 1997: 25)

It is noticeable that one of the key differences between the 'American' version of the play and the other two versions is in the widespread use of *Spruchbänder* in the English-language text. These projections, which fall into two types (those which 'introduce' each scene and those which are 'internal' to the scene, subdividing it into developmental episodes), announce to the audience the action that is about to take place and serve two principal functions. Firstly, they allow the audience to keep their 'eye on the course' of the action ('*Spannung auf den Gang*') (Brecht 1983: 20), rather than the outcome. This is a crucial aspect of a theatre which seeks to establish not simply *what* happened, but more importantly *why* it happened. Secondly, such announcements help to underpin the structural considerations of the play. They interrupt the narrative, so preventing the observer from seeing each episode as flowing out of the previous one, and in this way 'Brecht opens causality to question' (Thomson 1997: 66). We decided, therefore, to reinstate many of the *Spruchbänder* from the American version, so as to make the episodic structure of the play more transparent to actors

and audience alike. In total we used 32 'internal' projections, compared to 42 in the 'American' version, whereas the 'Danish' and 'Berlin' versions use no 'internal' projections, but only those which introduce each scene.

The concept of *Gestus* extends to all aspects of the epic performance, including stage groupings (the attitude displayed by the way in which the characters position themselves in space and in relation to one and another) and costuming (the attitude displayed by the way in which the characters clothe and decorate themselves). The issue of costuming is particularly interesting in relation to *Galileo*, where Brecht uses costume to represent the restrictive nature of one's social and/or political position. In the 'pope-dressing' scene, Barberini's resistance to the Cardinal Inquisitor is gradually eroded as he is dressed in his ceremonial robes of office, literally suppressing his humanity beneath the mantle of the Church. Likewise, Galileo himself is at his most vital and anarchic in the opening scene where he appears semi-naked. This was an idea that we pursued and developed in our own production, with Galileo gradually acquiring an increasing number of garments as restrictions are imposed upon him and obstacles placed in his way by the Church, until the penultimate scene where, as an old man, he is under house arrest and burdened with many layers of clothing and a blanket.

Concluding thoughts: *Galileo* in performance

Galileo was performed four times over a period of three days and this brought its own rewards and frustrations. Not to have actually performed the play after all the rehearsal would have been unthinkable for the students, and I too was eager to see the whole play under performance conditions, but an inevitable consequence of this was that in the last month of rehearsal, the research and pedagogical imperatives that had hitherto driven the rehearsal process gave way to production imperatives. As the performance dates approached, I became increasingly dismayed to find that the actors were falling back into the more familiar Stanslavskian-based approaches to acting as a way of responding to their own anxieties. It was not until the second performance that, with one show under their belts, the actors once more began to put into practice the techniques of epic acting with which we had experimented. By the fourth and final performance, everything finally went as we had intended.

The performances certainly confirmed our belief that our translation worked and that the principles of epic theatre have relevance for contemporary audiences, but beyond that, their value had been to provide a suitable conclusion to the six months of rehearsal, where the real learning had taken place. In this sense, the process far outweighed the performance, which could have been a preparation for further rehearsal and exploration of the epic form. One might convincingly argue that a willingness to question and re-evaluate both the text and Brecht's theories during rehearsals was the most significant Brechtian aspect of the work. In Heiner Müller's words: 'To produce Brecht without critiquing him is to betray him' (quoted in Lyons 1999: 265).

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