

*LEHRSTÜCK AND SCHAUSTÜCK*

*LEHRSTÜCK AND SCHAUSTÜCK:*

THE UNITY OF  
BRECHT'S DRAMA

By

CHARLENE MARIE GUY, B.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

© by Charlene Marie Guy, September 1993



MASTER OF ARTS (1993)  
(German)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: *Lehrstück* and *Schaustück*: The Unity of Brecht's Drama

AUTHOR: Charlene Marie Guy, B.A. (Memorial University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Hans Schulte

NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 113

## Abstract:

---

Given the recent demise of "real existing socialism," socialist literature raises a number of new questions for the contemporary audience. A case in point is the dramatic theory and practice of the German writer and dramatist Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956). Based as it was upon the premises of Marxism, how relevant is Brecht's art after the *Wende*? This study seeks to address this question through a revised look at Brecht's Marxist plays.

A commonly accepted tenet of Brecht research to date is that his plays demonstrate a development on the part of the playwright. Those Brechtian plays written after Brecht's first study of Marxist theory in the late 1920s can be divided into two groups: the *Lehrstücke*, or learning plays, which were brief, theatrical exercises in social behaviour, designed only for participants, rather than an audience, and the *Schaustücke*, full-scale plays to be performed onstage before an audience. Implicit in the approach of the so-called *Phasentheorie* is a tendency to consider the learning plays of lesser quality than the plays of Brecht's later work, and to emphasize differences between the two models.

Upon closer examination, however, the most striking characteristic of Brecht's dramatic theory and practice as it develops is not the divergence, but the unity of his plays. Using Brecht's *Die Maßnahme* (1930) and *Das Leben des Galilei* (1938/39) as paradigms of the *Lehrstück* and *Schaustück*, respectively, this study first reinterprets the learning play to then contrast and compare the two plays in terms of form and content. This reevaluation of Brecht's development as a dramatist reveals that the differences between *Lehrstück* and *Schaustück* are essentially of a formal nature, and that these differences are outweighed by the intent and the content of the plays. Since Brecht's foremost concern with the dramatic medium is communicating a social message, the greatest significance of structure to the play is that it "structures" the play's socio-political content. Consequently, not the differences, but the continuities between Brecht's learning plays and the full-scale plays are meaningful. They indicate the unity of Brecht's dramatic theory and practice: to empower people with the knowledge that they can potentially liberate themselves from repressive forces within society through understanding their social nature and working together in community.

## **Acknowledgements:**

---

Although this study bears my name, it could never have been completed without the assistance of others. I would like to express my gratitude to the DAAD for the Annual Grant that enabled me to attend and conduct research at the Universität Karlsruhe in 1991-92. I would also like to thank Professor Dr. Jan Knopf for his encouragement and interest in my work, as well as the members of my thesis committee, Dr. Fritz Widmaier and Dr. Jean Wilson, for their helpful advice. My sincere appreciation goes to Dr. Hans Schulte, in particular, for his never-ending supply of patience and for his invaluable input and guidance. Lastly, special thanks to my husband, Dr. Ian Dawe, for his love and support in all my endeavors.

for my father

**Table of Contents:**

---

Chapter One.....1

Chapter Two.....14

Chapter Three.....28

Chapter Four.....53

Chapter Five.....75

Chapter Six.....93

Works Cited.....110

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

"Brecht is dead," declared Hellmuth Karasek in 1978 (216). With that succinct statement, the Germanist-journalist did not so much affirm that Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) was no longer living, as comment upon the contemporary relevance--or irrelevance--of the German writer and dramatist. Today more than ever, some thirty-seven years after Brecht's death and three years after German unification and the following collapse of the communist bloc, some might well concur with Karasek. After all, what possible relevance could Brecht's work have now, given the recent political turn of events? For if a literary corpus is based upon a particular thought system, and that thought system is politically discredited, does it not follow that the literature is equally discredited?

Apparently, some scholars either agree or they simply choose to ignore this question. The latest trend in Brecht research tends to eschew treatment of the social and political impetus behind Brecht's literary efforts, concentrating instead on problems of form. Symptomatic of this new tendency in the research was the call for papers for the 8th

Symposium of the International Brecht Society. The call for papers inferred that traditional Brecht criticism is no longer relevant, looking to new theoretical approaches with which to reread Brecht, such as discourse analysis, semiology, psychoanalysis, feminism and deconstruction.

Indeed, the necessity of rereading Brecht at this time is clear. Less clear, however, is the reason for rejecting the pertinence of past Brecht scholarship. Given that the "dominant philological paradigm" (International Brecht Society 1) generally focused upon the socio-political message of Brecht's work (Brecht as a Marxist poet), and the fact that the artist himself defined his work very much in terms of its potential social impact, the near exclusion of the political element in the new critical tendency in Brecht research seems somewhat conspicuous. This seeming disinterest in the political Brecht may be connected to the *Brecht-Müdigkeit* of the late 1970s and early 1980s, possibly even to the western postwar tendency in the scholarship to separate the political and aesthetic elements in Brecht's art, or to both. More recent scholarship's disinterest in the political Brecht could perhaps also be attributed to a certain unwillingness to broach the subject of Brecht's ideological convictions

because they are perceived as damning to the validity of his work. The questions of Brecht's Marxism and the impact of the *Wende* upon the reception of his work are not easy ones to answer, but they cannot be ignored. Ironically, in simply avoiding such questions, the latest critical trend tacitly confirms that Brecht's work is discredited.

Brecht's work is dead only if we make it so. His most basic socialist-humanist message of liberation is just as much an integral part of his work and just as relevant today as ever, if not even more so. The political *Wende* of late provides the context for a unique understanding of the Marxist dramatist's work. In the past, *Systemzwang* on both sides of the Iron Curtain resulted in a decidedly dualistic view of the playwright. East German critics generally emphasized the Marxist thinker Brecht to the detriment of the artist Brecht, while the opposite was usually true of western criticism; more often than not, it tended to disregard Brecht's communism. In the GDR, Brecht was often portrayed as the premiere socialist dramatist (Mittenzwei 356-7). Some western scholars, most notably Martin Esslin, argued that Brecht's individual poetic genius eventually overcame his Marxism (208). Without this kind of ideological



polarization, the present historical vantage point may generate new critical perspectives on past scholarship and on Brecht's work. Consequently, now the possibility exists for a more balanced and accurate account of Brecht's art than that of the past.

It does not necessarily follow that a literary work is discredited if the thought system upon which it is based has been discredited. It does not suffice simply to assume the invalidity of Brecht's work as a result of the political failure of Communism as it existed until recently. On the contrary, had that political system embodied the humanism inherent in Brecht's dramas, it might well have endured. Naturally, this turn of events raises questions as to the validity of Brecht's literary efforts, founded as they are upon the basic premises of Marxism. But to ascertain the relevance or irrelevance of Brecht's literary work to a contemporary audience, the questions of Brecht's political art after the *Wende* must first be properly addressed. Necessary at this time is critical reevaluation of past Brecht scholarship and more importantly, Brecht's dramatic theory and practice, in order to address just these kinds of questions. This study

attempts to do so, if only on a limited basis, as a prelude to future research on Brecht's literary Marxism after the *Wende*.

Although Brecht was a prolific writer whose literary production covered a broad spectrum of genres, ranging from drama to prose to poetry, the Augsburg-born writer's work centres upon his plays. Accordingly, this reevaluation of Brecht's work will also concentrate upon his plays. Moreover, the reevaluation of Brecht's dramatic work will be informed by a critical reexamination of what Jan Knopf terms the *Phasentheorie*. This widespread and fundamental premise of traditional Brecht research understands Brecht's plays as a series of three developmental phases, each distinguished from the others in terms of content and structure (*Brecht-Handbuch* 412-3).

Since the foremost concern of this study is the the political element of Brecht's dramas, the phases to be considered are the two following Brecht's study of Marxism in 1926. These comprise respectively the *Lehrstücke* or the learning plays and Brecht's "mature work," as the full-scale plays of the exile years are known. The approach of the *Phasentheorie* is to regard these phases as two very distinct dramatic

forms that reflect two very different versions of Marxism on the part of Brecht. In this view, western criticism has tended to see an abstract, dogmatic Marxism in the learning plays, which Brecht supposedly overcame in the "mature work." East German criticism, on the other hand, tends to see a "mechanistic" Marxism in the learning plays, that develops into true socialist realism in the "mature work" (Knopf, *Brecht-Handbuch* 412-3). Regardless of the individual critic's ideological persuasion, the underlying implication of this approach is that the *Lehrstücke* are merely a stepping stone to Brecht's later plays, and, consequently, the learning plays are somehow inferior to the "mature work" (Mittenzwei 49; Esslin 210). As such a wide divergence between two phases in Brecht's development seems questionable, the *Phasentheorie* provides a new angle from which to approach a reevaluation of Brecht's work after the *Wende*.

As a critical approach to Brecht, the *Phasentheorie* is not without its problems, as it tends to emphasize dissimilarities between the *Lehrstücke* and the full-scale plays, which results in a certain compartmentalized view of Brecht's dramatic work. Without a doubt, Brecht slowly modifies and

refines his approach to writing over the course of his career, yet this development is not a clear, logical progression, as the *Phasentheorie* suggests, but rather a fluid process of experimentation. The focus of this critical perspective upon the apparent differences between the phases in Brecht's dramatic theory and practice obscures not only the playwright's experimental method, but also the relevant similarities between the individual stages in the dramatist's development. If these similarities between Brecht's earlier and later Marxist plays outweigh the differences, then the *Phasentheorie*'s implicit value judgement on the *Lehrstücke* has little basis in fact.

Warranted at this time is a closer look at the evolving continuities, in addition to the differences between the various stages in Brecht's development as a dramatist. Although they appear mutually exclusive, the ideas of change and stasis are in fact complementary in a discussion of the playwright, about whom can be safely said that essentially the only thing that remains constant is that he constantly changes. In examining Brecht's development as a dramatist, however, these concepts have an even greater significance, since they describe the relationship of form to

content in Brecht's plays. Since most differences between Brecht's early and later Marxist plays are primarily structural, these differences arguably represent attempts on Brecht's part to express a central, constant idea.

This idea is the same driving force that motivated Brecht throughout his career as a playwright and writer, namely, his most fundamental socialist-humanist message of emancipation: that human society is inherently historical and therefore mutable, and that through greater understanding of the hidden mechanics of society, people can bring their influence to bear on the course of history and society. Brecht's literary Marxism evolves in the way it is expressed, yet remains the essentially the same from the *Lehrstücke* to the full-scale plays.

In this study, the relationship between Brecht's earlier and later plays will be reexamined, using *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* respectively as paradigms of the *Lehrstücke* and the full-scale plays. Brecht's first Marxist plays are the *Lehrstücke*, didactic plays intended solely for participants rather than an audience. No further *Lehrstücke* were written after 1933, but, interestingly, when asked shortly before his death, Brecht cites the learning play *Die Maßnahme* as an

example of the theatre of the future (qtd. in KA 265). Of a stark grandeur not unlike that of the ancient Greek tragedies, *Die Maßnahme* stands out from the other learning plays. Nevertheless, it is perhaps the least known of Brecht's plays, as the playwright declared a ban on all performances of the piece due to the controversial nature of the plot (qtd. in KA 258). Because many regarded the play essentially as the justification of a political murder, *Die Maßnahme* is without doubt the most notorious, as well as the most explicitly political of Brecht's *Lehrstücke*. For this reason it will be treated here as the paradigm for Brecht's earlier Marxist plays.

Paradigmatic of Brecht's later dramatic work is the well-received *Das Leben des Galilei*.<sup>1</sup> Like the other full-scale plays of Brecht's later work, *Galilei* signals a departure from the *Lehrstücke* in that it is designed specifically for the theatre stage. This change in direction from amateur theatre for participants to professional theatre for an audience is the major difference between Brecht's earlier and later Marxist plays. Because they

<sup>1</sup> Several versions of both *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* exist. The original *Maßnahme* of 1930 (quoted from Steinweg's *Kritische Ausgabe*, abbreviated to KA) and the 1954 version of *Das Leben des Galilei* (quoted from volume 3 of the 1967 *Gesammelte Werke*, abbreviated as GW) are cited here.

are meant to be watched by an audience, Brecht distinguishes these later plays from the earlier learning plays, referring to them as *Schaustücke* (GW 17: 1024). While this change seems at first glance to indicate a return for Brecht to the traditional theatre apparatus, the *Schaustücke* represent the culmination and the continuation of Brecht's work with the *Lehrstücke*, using a different format.

A critical comparison of *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* in terms of the relationship of form to content provides insights toward a new *Brecht-Bild*. It is not Brecht's dramatic purpose, but only its vehicle that changes from the *Lehrstück* to the *Schaustück*. The principal questions to be resolved here are how and why this is so; what was Brecht trying to do with his learning plays, and why did he use this particular form? What, then, was he trying to do with the full-scale plays, and how and why did he use this particular form? What accounts for the move from the earlier Marxist plays to the later ones?

Reevaluation of Brecht's dramatic work entails also a reconsideration of his extensive accompanying theory. In this, Brecht outlines a plan for the refunctionalization of theatre as a social institution

and elucidates a number of fundamental concepts that define his *neue Dramatik*.<sup>2</sup> These concepts, in particular *Verfremdung*, *V-effekt*, and dialectics, represent important structural continuities in Brecht's plays that in essence give shape to his literary Marxism. Thus, the first chapter of this study summarizes the theoretical beginnings of Brecht's dramatic praxis to serve as a basis of reference for the comparison of his *Lehrstück* and *Schaustück*. As an example of the learning plays, *Die Maßnahme* is then reexamined in the second chapter. After the *Wende*, a fresh look at the oft-decried learning play will help to demonstrate greater similarities between these stages in Brecht's development as a dramatist than was previously apparent. The third chapter of this study is devoted to determining the extent and nature of differences between Brecht's earlier and later Marxist plays. Contrast of *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* reveals that these dissimilarities are in fact overstated, as they

<sup>2</sup> In the major theoretical treatise of his later work, the *Kleines Organon für das Theater*, Brecht noted the inadequacy of the designation "epic theatre," as well as the inadequacy of the name "Theater des wissenschaftlichen Zeitalters" (*GW* 16: 701). In the essay "Die Dialektik auf dem Theater," Brecht suggests that "dialectical theatre" is a more appropriate description than "epic theatre" (*GW* 16: 923-4). For lack of a better umbrella term and also to emphasize how Brecht's theatre differed from the conventional theatre, these terms will be used interchangeably with the term *neue Dramatik*, which he introduces in the "Weg zum zeitgenössischen Theater" (*GW* 15: 137).



pertain predominantly to the plays' structure, rather than to the for Brecht more significant socio-political content. In the fourth chapter, *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* are examined for shared characteristics of form, which indicate that the *Lehrstück* and the *Schaustück* are a great deal more alike than dissimilar in terms of structure.

The concluding chapter focuses upon the essential unity of Brecht's work. Comparison of *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* reveals a common social message that reflects the unity of Brecht's dramatic purpose throughout his plays. Thus in addition to certain significant similarities of form, the *Lehrstück* and the *Schaustück* share more importantly a singularity of purpose. These continuities in Brecht's development as a dramatist are constitutive for his work and his literary Marxism. As such, these constants are key for a new understanding of the Marxism which provides Brecht with the basis for his dramatic and literary work. Moreover, they are indispensable in addressing questions as to whether Brecht holds any relevance for the modern reader or audience now after the demise of "real existing socialism." If so, why and what is

it? What position will Brecht's work take in German intellectual and literary history? This study begins with these fundamental questions about Brecht after the *Wende*, and concludes with some possible answers.

## Chapter Two:

### From "Culinary" to Critical Theatre

"Die Beschreibung des Neuen erfolgt in einer Polemik gegen das Alte" (*GW* 15: 315).

This study of Brecht's Marxist plays after the *Wende* begins at the beginning of Brecht's *neue Dramatik*. In this chapter, the dramaturgical-theoretical foundation of Brecht's plays is reexamined in order to provide the context in which to compare Brecht's *Lehrstücke* and full-scale plays. Before contrasts and comparisons can be drawn between *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei*, some important questions must first be clarified. What distinguishes the *neue Dramatik* from the traditional theatre? For what reason does Brecht develop his new dramatic theory and practice? What exactly is to be understood by the term? As the basis for his praxis in the theatre, Brecht's extensive dramatic theory holds the keys to the continuities of structure and content from the *Lehrstücke* to the *Schaustücke* of the later work.

The opening quotation aptly describes the way in which Brecht's *Neue Dramatik* developed. His new dramatic theory grew out of a reaction to the contemporary theatre--the theatre of Naturalism. Brecht

refers to the Naturalistic theatre as "aristotelische Dramatik," because it is still largely defined in terms of the tragic, as delineated in Aristoteles' *Poetics*. According to Brecht's understanding of Aristoteles, the purpose of the drama is catharsis, or a cleansing of the spectator's emotions. The emotional experience of this type of drama exists insofar as the spectator vicariously shares in the experiences of the character through identification. It results from the actors' power of suggestion and ability to "become" the characters they portray. Because the illusion of "reality" secures the spectator's empathy with the character, the strength or weakness of a performance is measured by how well the illusion is created that one is not watching a play, but rather that the events transpiring onstage are somehow "real." Thus "Aristotelian" is how Brecht describes theatre that leads to *Einfühlung* or identification (GW 15: 240).

Brecht polemicizes against *Einfühlung*, referring to it as part of an aesthetics of superstition and magic. Through empathy with the character, according to Brecht, all of the perceptions, feelings and knowledge of the character become those of the spectator, who is drawn into the play as if

hypnotized (*GW* 15: 298, 341). In this way, "Aristotelian" theatre discourages rational, critical thought on the part of the audience, such that Brecht sarcastically comments that this type of theatre-goer leaves his mind along with his coat at the coatcheck. In the traditional theatre, he argues, dramatic art had degenerated to the sale of vicarious emotional experiences as a consumer product. Because of this focus on the consumer of the cultural "commodity," Brecht also refers to the bourgeois theatre as "culinary."

Illusionism and a focus on amusement were the targets of Brecht's criticism of the conventional theatre of his day. But these aesthetic problems reflected for Brecht a deeper political issue. "Das Drama einigt die Klassen, Generationen und Geister dadurch, daß es jeden Ernst einfach opfert und nichts mehr berührt, was an wahrhaftigen Interessen vorhanden ist" (*GW* 15: 90). The "culinary" drama is not only irrelevant, but more importantly, it is counterproductive for those living in the scientific age. Brecht argues that the conventional drama, with its emphasis on *Einfühlung* and illusionism, reflects the repressive connection between the culture industry and reactionary politics. "Reality" must not be imitated

in minute detail on the stage--all that matters is that the audience is drawn into the illusion that what they see onstage is "real." In Brecht's view, *Einfühlung* and illusionism, coupled with the most basic assumption of tragedy, that humans are subject to a set fate over which they have little or no control, enable the drama to embody a political agenda. Real social and political issues are excluded from the drama. Instead, a deterministic world, free from social and political contradiction, is reproduced onstage. This illusory harmony propagated by the theatre helps to create acquiescence on the part of the audience toward the social status quo. Thus the conventional theatre engenders consent for the predominant socio-political system. "Die Gesellschaft nimmt durch den Apparat auf, was sie braucht, um sich selbst zu reproduzieren" (*GW* 17: 1005). In other words, Brecht understands the institution of the theatre as a powerful nexus for political manipulation of the public.

The *neue Dramatik*'s first priority is the *Funktionswechsel*, or refunctionalization of the theatre as a social institution. With this term, the playwright refers to a fundamental change in the nature of the conventional theatre: "den Apparat also anders in die Gesellschaft stellen,

etwa ihn den Lehranstalten oder den großen Publikationsorganen anschließen" (*GW* 17: 1005). In contrast to the insidious, reactionary agenda of the bourgeois theatre, the *Funktionswechsel* of the theatre would entail its open politicization; the theatre's previous repressive social function would change to disseminating real political issues in society for the benefit of the public. Here lies the significance of science in Brecht's *neue Dramatik*. Brecht, a former student of natural sciences, sees in the scientific method of inquiry a valuable means of learning about society. If this scientific investigation were adapted in dramatic praxis, Brecht argues, the theatre could function as a kind of social planetarium or laboratory. Much as models are used in scientific experiments, the dramatic medium could serve as a model with which to demonstrate and study certain processes of human relations and society. Combined with a scientific approach, theatre could provide valuable insights into the social dynamic.<sup>1</sup> Thus the theatre would become a politically responsible institution, a medium of communicative information and learning.

<sup>1</sup> See also Knopf, *Brecht-Handbuch* 382-3.

In the 1929 essay "Weg zum zeitgenössischen Theater," Brecht proclaims that "Kunst folgt der Wirklichkeit" (*GW* 15: 196), a pronouncement that proves definitive for his *neue Dramatik*. The goal of the *neue Dramatik* is to replace illusion in the theatre with realism. The so-called "fourth wall" of the conventional stage is eliminated in the *neue Dramatik*, so as to make it quite clear to the audience that it is in a theatre, watching an artistic performance, and is not somehow watching an actual event as if through a keyhole (*GW* 15: 214). "Die Realität muß, bei aller Komplettheit, schon durch eine künstlerische Gestaltung verändert sein, damit sie als veränderbar erkannt und behandelt werden kann" (*GW* 15: 251). Whereas Naturalistic theatre seeks to create the most accurate artistic portrayals of life possible, realistic theatre, as Brecht understands it, clearly differentiates between life and art. Thus, in contrast to the fatalism of Naturalistic theatre, Brecht's realism reflects the mutability of historical reality. The dramatic representation is deliberately designed to reinforce its aesthetic nature, such that this "change" in reality (from the real object to its aesthetic representation) parallels the fact that reality is ever-changing. This separation of life and art on the stage is vital to



Brecht's *neue Dramatik*, because it is more conducive to the moment of learning, which had previously been neglected in the "culinary" theatre.

The primary concerns of realistic theatre, according to Brecht, are the actual social realities rather than the creation of true-to-life depictions of reality onstage. The purpose of epic-dialectical theatre is not to portray life on the stage for the audience's emotional experience, but "die Realität zum Sprechen zu bringen" (*GW* 16: 651; 15: 214; 16: 724). Realism enables the theatre "mit künstlerischen Mitteln ein Weltbild zu entwerfen, Modelle des Zusammenlebens der Menschen, die es dem Zuschauer ermöglichen konnten, seine soziale Umwelt zu verstehen und sie verstandesmäßig und gefühlsmäßig zu beherrschen" (*GW* 15: 295).

Although the dramatic representation must bear a certain accuracy to what it represents (*GW* 16: 725), realism as Brecht defines it in the *Messingkauf* dialogues is a great deal more than mere mimesis. Instead the realistic play must make visible "die Vorgänge hinter den Vorgängen," that is, the laws that determine the "processes of life" or social causality (*GW* 15: 256-7; 16: 520, 655). The realism of Brecht's *neue Dramatik*,

then, is the art of showing the world in such a way that its workings can be understood and therefore mastered (*GW* 15: 260).

Brecht's first step toward realistic theatre in the *neue Dramatik* is to eliminate *Einfühlung* as the basis of the dramatic experience.

*Einfühlung* and illusion are vestiges of the metaphysical, religious aspect of art, and so are no longer consistent with the scientific age.

Consequently, Brecht posits, a new materialist foundation for aesthetics, particularly for dramatic art, is necessary. *Einfühlung* is problematic for the playwright because of the socially counterproductive nature of the emotional responses it engenders in "Aristotelian" theatre. Fear and pity are negative, unproductive emotions, as they keep the audience passive. If the theatre could somehow channel socially productive emotions, such as the thirst for knowledge and helpfulness, to activate the audience, the theatre could potentially have a very different effect upon society.

As an alternative to *Einfühlung*, Brecht introduces the principle of *Verfremdung*, or alienation as the basis of the productive dramatic experience (*GW* 15: 301-4). Alienation is in itself hardly a radical innovation of Brecht's, but an old theatrical device in European satire and

parody, as well as a long-standing tradition in Asian theatre. The difference, however, is that Brecht does not use *Verfremdung* merely as an artistic effect; rather it is directed toward a very specific social end, making *Verfremdung* the most important structural aspect of Brecht's *neue Dramatik*. Brecht first defines the term as follows:

Einen Vorgang oder einen Charakter verfremden heißt zunächst einfach, dem Vorgang oder dem Charakter das Selbstverständliche, Bekannte, Einleuchtende zu nehmen und über ihn Staunen und Neugierde zu erzeugen. (GW 15: 301)

The function Brecht attributes to *Verfremdung* in the drama demonstrates his profound understanding of the human psyche. People generally tend to be rather complacent, not giving a great deal of thought or consideration to those things--facts, events and phenomena--in our world that appear obvious. Such givens, particularly with regard to systems of power in society are not at all so self-evident, Brecht avers. But because the validity of the familiar is never challenged, it is not fully understood. It is easier to accept society at face value than to question it, Brecht realizes, and so he adopts the principle of *Verfremdung* as the basis for his *neue Dramatik*. *Verfremdung* removes familiarity from

social processes, enabling the audience to regard them critically, which is for Brecht the first step toward social change (*GW* 16: 681-2).

In the *Neue Technik der Schauspielkunst*, Brecht explicates

*Verfremdung* further:

Das Selbstverständliche wird in gewisser Weise unverständlich gemacht, das geschieht aber nur, um es dann um so verständlicher zu machen. . . es muß mit der Gewohnheit gebrochen werden, das betreffende Ding bedürfe keiner Erläuterung. (*GW* 15: 355)

By lifting the familiar from its normal context, *Verfremdung* enables the audience to see the usual and the ordinary as suddenly quite unusual and extraordinary. In this way, something previously understood and accepted appears quite different, thus provoking critical questions about what was originally familiar and understood. Looking critically at the now seemingly unfamiliar thing leads to a new, heightened understanding of it.

As a method of understanding, *Verfremdung* is the key to the practical social function of the Brecht's *neue Dramatik*. *Verfremdung* reveals the inherent contradictions in all things, including the diverse, complex contradictions of society and in so doing, produces a critical, active attitude in the audience (*GW* 15: 378-9, 475). Observing processes of human society through the magnifying glass of *Verfremdung* permits a

curious, naive, objective *neues Sehen*, which Brecht likens to that of an inventor or scientist. As a structural device, dramatic alienation of social processes should provoke in the audience what the playwright describes in the *Kleines Organon* as the scientific, wondering perspective of a Galilei (*GW* 16: 681-2). While this new way of seeing is to be directed first of all at the artistic performance, it is primarily the world which Brecht wants us to examine in this critical fashion. This criticism, suggests Brecht, is inherently positive for the spectator in its negativity, in that it is active and productive, and thus emotional and enjoyable (*GW* 15: 377-8). The spectator becomes a co-producer of the drama in that he is able to take a judgemental, political stance to a particular performance (*GW* 15: 223). Brecht refers to this critical attitude as *eingreifendes Denken*. Semantically, the phrase suggests the link between thought and action. Critical thought results in real understanding of a particular thing, which then makes intervention or change of that thing possible (*GW* 15: 302). Instead of catharsis, "diese neue, neugierige, aktive, erfinderische Haltung" and the knowledge that the spectator can intervene in reality constitutes

the "Kunstcharakter" of Brecht's socio-political dramatic art (*GW* 15: 275, 377).

*Verfremdung* has profound implications for the structure of the theatre, infusing all structural factors of drama with new functions. These dramaturgical devices, known as *V-effekte*, permeate the *neue Dramatik* and range from epic elements such as a chorus, narrator, historicization, and montage, to songs, music, acting method, set construction, and much more. They function to permit the audience productive criticism from a social point of view (*GW* 16: 553).

The refunctionalization of the theatre Brecht intended with the *neue Dramatik* was directed less at the traditional drama than at the actual theatre apparatus. "Die Kampffront der neuen Dramatik richtet sich im Moment dennoch beinahe weniger gegen die alte Dramatik, die ja lediglich preisgegeben werden mußte, als vielmehr gegen das bestehende Theater, worunter tatsächlich die wirklichen Institute zu verstehen sind" (*GW* 15: 171). The problem of creating a theatre in keeping with the times, as Brecht saw it, is the apparatus. The artists, the actual producers of dramatic art, have little control over the "product" because they do not

control the means of production--the theatre apparatus. Ultimately the theatre owners have the final decision on the plays produced in the theatre. But because they have vested interests in maintaining the social and political status quo, there is little room in the apparatus for dramatic art that would challenge this status quo. Therefore, Brecht concluded that the only possibility for the *Funktionswechsel* of the theatre would be if the artists controlled the means of production.

In response to what he perceived as a repressive institution and its inherent pressure to sell entertainment, Brecht looked toward developing a kind of theatre that would be for and by the producer rather than the consumer. This *Produzentenkunst*, Brecht's first tentative step in the direction of the *Funktionswechsel* of the theatre, is known as the *Lehrstück* or learning play. These plays, written between the years 1929 and 1933, were intended for amateurs, or those, "die weder für Kunst bezahlen noch für Kunst bezahlt werden, sondern Kunst machen wollen," as Brecht and Eisler wrote (*GW* 17: 1030). With the learning plays, which represent sociological-pedagogical experiments that make use of theatrical means outside of the theatre in order to influence the thinking of

participants, Brecht removed the "stage" to schools, union halls and factories (*GW* 15: 239). Likely because of this controversial direction, the *Lehrstücke* have generally been the object of misunderstanding.

Recognizing that its didactic designation detracted from its potential impact, Brecht himself was forced to question the wisdom of the term *Lehrstück* (*GW* 17: 1027). In the next chapter, the learning play will be reexamined using *Die Maßnahme* as a model, so as to clarify some misconceptions about the learning plays and gain new understanding of Brecht's intention with them.



### Chapter Three:

#### "Mißverständnisse über das *Lehrstück*": *Die Maßnahme*

The basic premise of this study is the essential unity of Brecht's plays written after 1926. While the continuum of his plays is processual and eclectic, there are at the same time, paradoxically, certain elements of the Brechtian drama which remain constant throughout the playwright's development. Brecht scholarship to date has generally emphasized the differences between Brecht's earlier and later Marxist plays, concluding that while the learning plays are intentionally dogmatic and doctrinaire, this orthodoxy recedes in the the "großen Dramen" of the "mature" work (Schumacher, *Drama und Geschichte* 851-2; Klotz 115; Subiotto 203-4; Esslin 112). The implication of this approach is that the learning plays are inferior to the so-called "classical" plays; moreover, it represents a serious misunderstanding of the *Lehrstücke* and their relation to Brecht's later dramatic work. The *Lehrstücke* are not designed as *Schaustücke*, and so cannot be compared. In this chapter the why, the how, and the what of the learning plays will be examined, using the *Maßnahme* as a

model, so as to better facilitate the comparison of *Lehrstücke* and full-scale plays

The learning plays represent Brecht's first attempt at the *Funktionswechsel* of the theatre. He concluded that the reactionary nature of the theatre with its emphasis on consumption precluded any attempts to revolutionize it. With the *Lehrstück*, however, Brecht circumvented the apparatus, and put the control of art production squarely in the hands of the producers, i.e. the actors. This lack of accountability to a consumption-oriented institution would make possible the *Funktionswechsel* of the theatre, because the *Lehrstück* represented the transformation of the "Vergnügungsstätte" into a "Publikationsorgan" (GW 17: 1016). In defining his *neue Dramatik* in contrast to the "Aristotelian" theatre, Brecht had emphasized the restoration of the theatre's *Lehrwert*. In the *Lehrstück*, this emphasis was radicalized, such that Brecht wrote in 1929: "Erst der neue Zweck macht die neue Kunst. Der neue Zweck heißt: Pädagogik" (GW 15: 198).

The tendency of the learning play is obviously pedagogical, but the *Lehrstück's* real significance lies in what is to be learned. According to

Brecht's *Theorie der Pädagogien*, the subject of the learning plays is socially productive behaviour. The *Lehrstück* represents education for the state (society):

Indem die jungen Leute im Spiele Taten vollbringen, die ihrer eigenen Betrachtung unterworfen sind, werden sie für den Staat erzogen. . . . Aber gerade die Darstellung des Asozialen durch den werdenen Bürger des Staates ist dem Staate sehr nützlich, besonders wenn sie nach genauen und großartigen Mustern ausgeführt wird. . . . Der Staat kann die asozialen Triebe der Menschen am besten dadurch verbessern, daß er sie, die von der Furcht und der Unkenntnis kommen, in einer möglichst vollendeten und dem einzelnen selbstständig beinahe unerreichbaren Form von jedem erzwingt. (*GW* 17: 1022-3)

With the learning play, the theatrical medium becomes the means of collective learning about asocial behaviour for the benefit of the state or society. Brecht makes it clear, however, that only the actors can learn from the learning play, which he defines as follows:

Das Lehrstück lehrt dadurch, daß es gespielt, nicht daß es gesehen wird. . . . Es liegt dem Lehrstück die Erwartung zugrunde, daß der Spielende durch die Durchführung bestimmter Handlungsweisen, Einnahme bestimmter Haltungen, Wiedergabe bestimmter Reden und so weiter gesellschaftlich beeinflußt werden kann. (*GW* 17: 1024)

Brecht's insistence that only actors can learn from the learning play was a reaction to the passivity of the audience in the "Aristotelian" theatre. More importantly, however, this emphasis on the actors is particularly significant in that it reflects the connection between thought and action

(*Betrachten* and *Tat*) for Brecht. This emphasis on action inherent in the form of the *Lehrstück*, a play only for actors, reflects its purpose-- modification of social thought and behaviour through imitation of and reflection upon asocial patterns of behaviour in the play.

As a result of the strongly pedagogical focus on behavioural modification in the *Lehrstück*, some philologists regard the learning plays as singularly doctrinaire and behaviouristic in the Watsonian sense, as has been more recently suggested by Hansjürgen Rosenbauer<sup>1</sup> (45; Esslin 41; Hecht, *Brechts Weg* 39). Klaus Lazarowicz also subscribes to this understanding of the learning plays; he defines the *Lehrstück* as "Instrument der Indoktrination im marxistisch-leninistischen Sinn . . ." (210). This interpretation regards the learning play as an ideological inculcation of the participants because it understands the connection of action and observation in the *Lehrstück* as a means of unconsciously modifying the participants' behaviour.

The problem with this assumption is that the association of action and thought in the learning play does not imply behaviourism, but exactly

<sup>1</sup> For a more extensive rebuttal of Rosenbauer's thesis, see Knopf, *Bertolt Brecht. Ein kritischer Forschungsbericht* 80-90.

the opposite. Were the *Lehrstücke* behaviouristic, conscious experience would not come into play, and the patterns of behaviour presented in the *Lehrstück* would contribute toward an unconscious conditioning of the actors' behaviour. The *Lehrstück*, however, entails not unconscious learning, but conscious "un-learning" of certain types of behaviour. Because typical behaviour and ways of thinking are ordinarily performed unconsciously, the *Lehrstück* builds awareness of them, as the actors reflect upon the patterns of behaviour they play out. Since critical observation of behaviour is the main purpose of the learning play, *Verfremdung* subsequently proves the determining factor in the entire dramatic structure of the *Lehrstück* (GW 17: 1024). Repeated imitation of the behavioural patterns, coupled with the *V-effekt*, facilitates examination of typical behaviour that would not be possible otherwise. As a result, the *Lehrstück* dis-plays "normal" or accepted patterns of behaviour and attitudes as abnormal and strange. Distanced (*ver-fremd-et*) in this way, criticism of such behaviour and attitudes and thus their change is possible. The critical function of the *Lehrstück* is at the same time its liberating impulse; the purpose of the learning play is not to inculcate actors with a

particular ideology, but rather to enable them to see critically through the confines of ideology.

The fact that the text serves not as an end in itself, but merely as a point of departure for discussion, attests to the non-dogmatic nature of the learning play. It contains a central *Lehrproblem*, but its solution is never presented as cut and dried. The players must work out amongst themselves how best to address it. As Brecht points out, "im lehren muß das lernen enthalten bleiben. die lehrstücke sind nicht lediglich parabeln, die eine aphoristische moral mit zeigbildern ausstatten, sie untersuchen auch, deshalb ist es nicht nötig, daß die lösungen allzu konzentriert und auf allzu simple formen gebracht werden [sic]. . ." (qtd. in Steinweg, *Das Lehrstück* 23).

The learning play, *Die Maßnahme*, was written in 1930 in collaboration with the composer Hanns Eisler for Germany's many amateur and worker's choirs. It represents the playwright's first declaration of solidarity with the Communist Party and Brecht's first thematization of Marx and Lenin's theory, with which the playwright had come into contact just a short time prior to the conception of the play in

1930. Lenin's writings, in particular, are significant to the plot, in that Brecht refers to Lenin's essay "Der linke Radikalismus, die Kinderkrankheit des Kommunismus," as well as his 1920 speech "Rede auf dem allrussischen Kongreß des kommunistischen Jugendverbandes Rußlands" (*BFA* 3: 104). In both Lenin supplies guidelines for appropriate behaviour in class struggle. From the former are drawn the words of the *Kontrollchor*:

Wer für den Kommunismus kämpft, der muß kämpfen können und nicht kämpfen; die Wahrheit sagen und die Wahrheit nicht sagen; Dienste erweisen und Dienste verweigern; Versprechen halten und Versprechen nicht halten; sich in Gefahr begeben und die Gefahr vermeiden; kenntlich sein und unkenntlich sein. Wer für den Kommunismus kämpft, hat von allen Tugenden nur eine: daß er für den Kommunismus kämpft. (*KA* 41-2)

This basic social and political message of *Die Maßnahme* is based upon two principal Marxist assumptions: that society is unjust and must change, and that this change can only come about through proletarian revolution. According to Lenin's understanding of "appropriate behaviour," however, this will require rejection of the bourgeois morality of absolutes, and the adoption of a new morality derived from the interests of the class struggle. In *Die Maßnahme*, Brecht put Lenin's definition of appropriate behaviour in the class struggle (relative morality)

to the test of social (revolutionary) reality. The purpose of the play is "politisch unrichtiges Verhalten zu zeigen und dadurch richtiges zu lehren" (GW 17: 1034).

In order to work out the "right" way to act, Brecht constructed *Die Maßnahme* almost as an abstract, theoretical problem. The play opens as four Agitators step forward from the ranks of a Party court to be honoured for a successful propaganda mission in China. They interrupt the proceedings to report that during the mission they had to kill their Young Comrade, who had endangered the movement. To show the necessity of their action, the Agitators recount the circumstances of the Young Comrade's death by alternately taking on his role and those of other figures. To facilitate actors' critical analysis of this *Lehrproblem*, *Verfremdung* is the central structural moment of *Die Maßnahme*. Correct political behaviour is displayed in *Die Maßnahme* by means of *V-effekte*, the most important of which are the chorus, the play in the play, characterization, acting method, songs, and language.

With the Party court of *Die Maßnahme*, Brecht draws upon the ancient dramatic device of the chorus. By commenting upon the action,



and so creating a certain epic distance, the chorus serves as a *V-effekt*. Even the name *Kontrollchor* suggests its role: it is to check, to verify or to reexamine the account presented. Its function ties in closely with the overall dramatic framework of the *Lehrstück*, which Brecht constructs as a play in the play. The Agitators recount their propaganda mission in China to the *Kontrollchor* by playing out the events leading to the death of the Young Comrade. The *Kontrollchor* considers the facts and circumstances of the matter, interrupting the play to ask questions of the Agitators, in order to determine the necessity of the action. Discussion segments between the chorus and the Agitators interrupt the action and permit reflection upon the play's *Lehrproblem*. In the first discussion section of *Die Maßnahme*, at the end of the scene *Gerechtigkeit*, the Agitators and the *Kontrollchor* extrapolate the meaning of the term "justice" in the class struggle through discussion about the Young Comrade's "just" behaviour in the textile worker's incident. The chorus comes to agree with the Agitators that minor injustices are unimportant in light of the greater goal of ending the real injustice in society (KA 50).

Because not so much the individual character as the social implications of his actions and interactions with others is significant to the play, characterization in the *Lehrstück* is minimal at best. As in Expressionist drama, none of the characters bear proper names, because their individual identity is of little consequence here. Instead, dramatic figures are identified by their social roles: *Der Kuli, der Aufseher, der Reishändler*. In suggesting that Brecht was unable to create any real, individual characters as he wrote the learning plays due to his abstract world view (*Die dramatischen Versuche* 370), Schumacher misconstrues the *Lehrstück*'s lack of developed characters. In fact, this is quite intentional, as developed characterization is superfluous in the learning play, according to Brecht. He writes in the *Lehrstücktheorie* that "Ästhetische Maßstäbe für die Gestaltung von Personen, die für die Schaustücke gelten, sind beim Lehrstück außer Funktion gesetzt. Besonders eigenzügige, einmalige Charaktere fallen aus, es sei denn, die Eigenzügigkeit und Einmaligkeit wäre das Lehrproblem" (GW 17: 1024).

Brecht specifies further in the *Lehrstücktheorie* that the acting method is to be that of the epic theatre; that is, the player does not

attempt to create the illusion that he is the character he plays, but instead "shows" his character, trying on his role, much like a mask (*GW* 17: 1024). Therefore, the actors introduce themselves in the various roles they take on: "Ich bin der Sekretär des Parteihauses. . . ." "Wir sind die Kulis. . . ." (*KA* 38, 43). Brecht writes that "Die Spieler müssen lediglich das jeweilige Verhalten der Vier zeigen, welches zum Verständnis und zur Beurteilung des Falles gekannt werden muß" (*GW* 17: 1032). The interest of characters in the *Lehrstück* is not their individual characteristics, but the patterns of behaviour they represent, so that actors can understand and make judgements upon the situation or *Lehrproblem* presented.

This acting method is paralleled in *Die Maßnahme*, in which play takes place within the play. The result is that all "characters" in the *Maßnahme* are twice removed: the Young Comrade, as well as the Coolies and the cruel Overseer are not even independent characters, but are merely represented by the Agitators. For this reason these figures seem even less real; they are parodies of typical forms of behaviour. The fervour of the Young Comrade in particular parodies idealistic thought; "Mein Herz schlägt für die Revolution. . . . Ich bin für die Freiheit. Ich

glaube an die Menschheit" (KA 38). Conversely, the Agitators are not really independent characters either, since their primary purpose is to take on the roles of other figures in the story they tell. As Knopf points out, not even the gender of these figures is clear (*Brecht-Handbuch* 98). Because of this and the fact that they alternately portray the Young Comrade, the four are completely interchangeable. In this way, the characters of the *Lehrstück* are twice removed from the players, thus making empathy with the characters and their actions even more difficult, and enabling the participants to maintain a certain critical distance to the play.

Songs are dramaturgically vital in working out the *Lehrproblem* of *Die Maßnahme*. Brecht uses songs as inserts of a different medium which interrupt the action of the play, so that any illusion that the "play" is real is destroyed (qtd. in Hecht, *Brecht im Gespräch* 119-20). These songs, *Lob der illegalen Arbeit*, *Song von Angebot und Nachfrage*, *Gesang der Reiskahnschlepper*, and *Lob der Partei*, and *Ändere die Welt sie braucht es* would become classics of socialist literature even independently of the play. More importantly, however, the songs' special position in *Die*

*Maßnahme* underscores significant ideas expressed in the play. In the scene "Was ist eigentlich ein Mensch?" the Young Comrade is too revolted by the *Händler's* inhumanity to share a meal with him. As a result of the Young Comrade's refusal to compromise his personal honour, the *Händler* refuses to arm the Coolies. The final comment of the *Kontrollchor* on the scene is *Ändere die Welt, sie braucht es*. The song's theme reinforces the necessity of relegating personal interests to the greater one of changing the world for the better:

Könntest du die Welt endlich verändern, wofür  
 Wärest du dir zu gut?  
 Versinke in Schmutz  
 Umarme den Schlächter, aber  
 Ändere die Welt: sie braucht es! (KA 54)

The language of *Die Maßnahme* has an important alienating function. "Natural" dialogue is avoided in order to destroy any illusion and to focus the players' attention on the *Lehrproblem*. Unsophisticated vocabulary and syntax consisting primarily of simple sentences lend the play a silent grandeur, as well as a stylized starkness that accentuates the exaggerated characters and behaviours demonstrated in the *Lehrstück*. Repetition in the play works much as a *Leitmotiv* in narrative prose to hold the literary work together, and it lends *Die Maßnahme* a certain

ritualistic element that has often been the object of both criticism and admiration.<sup>2</sup> In this way, repetition emphasizes key passages, and so facilitates greater introspection and reflection on certain ideas and behaviours presented in the play. Thus it is significant that the Young Comrade should repeat the words first spoken in "Die Auslöschung" by the *Leiter des Parteihauses* as the Young Comrade affirms his "Einverständnis" (which Brecht equates with correct political behaviour, as shall be shown) by his own death: "Im Interesse des Kommunismus einverstanden mit dem Vormarsch der proletarischen Massen aller Länder, Ja sagend zur Revolutionierung der Welt" (KA 41).

The correct political behaviour to be learned from *Die Maßnahme* Brecht also refers to as "eingreifendes Verhalten" (qtd. in KA 239). With this, Brecht takes up in *Die Maßnahme* a motif that is first treated in the *Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis*, then in *Der Jasager und der Neinsager*. In the *Badener Lehrstück*, "Einverständnis" is the term given to the behaviour of the "eingreifend Denkenden" (GW 2: 602). With this concept, Brecht takes up Francis Bacon's pronouncement on natural

<sup>2</sup> See Klaus Lazarowicz, 215; Herbert Lüthy (qtd. in KA 421); Joachim Kaiser 103; Reinhold Grimm 398.

science, that we can only overcome nature by giving in to it, and applies it to social reality (Knopf, *Brecht-Handbuch* 77). *Einverständnis* is acting in accordance with reality. The idea is that thought ("Denken") makes action ("Eingreifen") possible. Only by critically thinking about and understanding the "real" circumstances of a particular situation can one see what is required to change it. Therefore, understanding or knowledge of something carries with it the potential for its change. Later in the parable *Maßnahmen gegen die Gewalt*, Herr Keuner personifies this same "realistic" behaviour, which is "vernünftig, wenn es auch nicht heldenhaft ist" (BFA 3: 72).

In *Die Maßnahme* Brecht takes up this motif once more, but this time in connection with the proletarian revolution. Here *Einverständnis* represents the desired "politisch richtiges Verhalten." Again and again the Young Comrade declares his *Einverständnis* with the goals of the Party and the requirements of the propaganda mission, only to demonstrate by his actions that he is not truly "einverstanden." In each of the scenes "Der Stein," "Gerechtigkeit," and "Was ist eigentlich ein Mensch?", the Young Comrade shortsightedly acts on his feelings, and in so doing

compromises the mission and lives of the Agitators. An example of this lack of *Einverständnis* or politically incorrect behaviour is the scene "Der Stein," in which the Young Comrade is sent to spread propaganda among the *Reiskahnschleppern*. But the Young Comrade is unable to carry out his task, since he is consumed with pity at the terrible plight of the Coolies. "Schwer ist es, ohne Mitleid diese Männer zu sehen" (KA 45). Consequently, he is nearly caught, all of the Agitators are pursued for a week, and are prevented from their propagandistic activities in the lower part of the city Mukden. After the incident, the Agitators report: "Der junge Genosse sah ein, daß er das Gefühl über den Verstand gestellt hatte" (KA 46). Over and over the Young Comrade allows himself to be ruled by spontaneous emotion, not considering the long-term implications of his actions for the revolutionary work. His feelings are genuine, but misplaced, because they are not informed by reason. In "Die Maßnahme--Übungstext, nicht Tragödie," Reiner Steinweg shows comprehensively how the actions of the Young Comrade represent an idealistic way of thinking and behaving (136). His language shows clearly that he is a revolutionary primarily out of feeling: "Mein Herz schlägt für die



Revolution. Der Anblick des Unrechts trieb mich in die Reihen der Kämpfer. Ich bin für die Freiheit. Ich glaube an die Menschheit" (KA 38).

Were he *einverstanden* with the group's task of social change, the Young Comrade would understand the nature of revolutionary reality, which requires that all work together for effective change. True *Einverständnis* is represented in *Die Maßnahme* by the behaviour of the Agitators and the *Kontrollchor*. The Agitators understand the necessity of personal sacrifice for the good of the collective and act in accordance with that "reality." This is demonstrated in the scene "Die Auslöschung," in which the Agitators are disguised as Chinese for their illegal foray into China. At the same time, however, "Die Auslöschung" has a symbolic meaning, as Brecht indicates in the notes to the *Maßnahme*. The music to this portion should show ". . . eine gesellschaftliche Umfunktionierung als heroischen Brauch . . ." (GW 17: 1031). Through their *Einverständnis* the Agitators gain a new heroic position in society (KA 40-3). Their roles as individuals are no longer determined by personal interest, but by the

interest of the collective. The song "Lob der illegalen Arbeit" is a comment on this heroic stance.

Wer täte nicht viel für den Ruhm, aber wer  
Tut's für das Schweigen?

...  
Und der Ruhm fragt umsonst  
Nach den Tätern der großen Tat. (KA 42)

Because their activities are illegal, the Agitators even give up personal recognition for their efforts for the revolution. But the reward for their heroism is greater than individual recognition. It is the realization of the revolution in the "großen Tat" through the masses. Thus, the Agitators portray *Einverständnis* insofar as they understand the necessity of placing long-term goals before short-term ones: "Wir hatten kein Brot für den Hungrigen, sondern nur Wissen für den Unwissenden, darum sprachen wir von dem Urgrund des Elends, merzten das Elend nicht aus, sondern sprachen von der Ausmerzung des Elends" (KA 43). In contrast to the Young Comrade, they are able to direct their immediate emotional responses productively, looking beyond immediate help to complete amelioration of repressive social conditions.

Similarly, the *Kontrollchor* demonstrates *Einverständnis* through its actions. It is not an "übergeordnete Instanz" (Kaiser 102), but it too, like

the participants of the learning play, *Die Maßnahme*, learns correct political behaviour by means of the Young Comrade's well-intentioned mistakes. In each of the discussion segments that conclude the scenes "Der Stein," "Gerechtigkeit" and "Was ist eigentlich ein Mensch?", in which the Agitators play out the politically incorrect behaviour of the Young Comrade, the *Kontrollchor* asks the Agitators whether the Young Comrade's actions were not justified. The Agitators' response is always the same: No, as in each situation the Young Comrade failed to act in accordance with the long-term goal of the Revolution, but acted rather with more immediate individual goals in mind, which effectively would hinder more than help the propaganda mission. Thus the *Kontrollchor* comes to agree with the Agitators again and again that the Young Comrade acted irresponsibly: "Wir sind einverstanden" (KA 46; 54). Convinced that the death of the Young Comrade could not have been avoided, the play concludes with the words of the *Kontrollchor* to the Agitators: "Wir sind einverstanden mit euch" (KA 64). Ironically, not until it is too late does the Young Comrade recognize the necessity of *Einverständnis*. By declaring himself *einverstanden* with his

death, the Young Comrade ". . . hat der Wirklichkeit gemäß geantwortet" according to the *Kontrollchor*. In *Einverständnis* with the measure taken, the Young Comrade acts in accordance with the revolutionary reality, and demonstrates correct political behaviour for the first time.

In conversation with Hans Notowicz, Hans Eisler asserts that the death of the Young Comrade is of little interest in *Die Maßnahme*, for the purpose of the exercise is to show political behaviour (qtd. in KA 267). Eisler's remark is misleading, however, because the measure taken (i.e. the death of the Young Comrade) represents the consequence of a certain political behaviour. The very title of the play--*Die Maßnahme*--underlines the significance of the measure taken to the question of correct and incorrect political behaviour in the learning play.

This would prove rather problematic for the reception of *Die Maßnahme*, which released a storm of controversy, provoking strong critiques of both Brecht and the play. Many felt that the *Lehrstück* was intended to condone political murder, as does Hannah Arendt (98) as well as Ruth Fischer, who sees in the play the anticipation of the Moscow trials (618). Esslin identifies theme of *Einverständnis* with party

discipline (138), but Communist critics, most notably Alfred Kurella, criticized *Die Maßnahme* as unrealistic, accusing the playwright of idealism and lack of knowledge of Party practices (qtd. in *KA* 378-93; Mittenzwei 49).

The problem with such criticisms is that they single out the Young Comrade's death and take it out of context. *Die Maßnahme* cannot be considered a justification of political murder, nor an example of Communist party discipline. Such interpretations presume that the Young Comrade is punished for not complying with orders. Moreover, they oversimplify the issue. Brecht's interest in *Die Maßnahme* goes beyond the death of the Young Comrade, right or wrong. Instead, Brecht is interested in the surrounding circumstances and their impact on the morality of the measure taken. The text of the *Lehrstück* indicates that under the given circumstances, the Agitators could find no better solution to their predicament than the death of the Young Comrade. In the scene "Äußerste Verfolgung und Analyse," the *Kontrollchor* helps to recreate the danger and pressure under which the Agitators had to analyse their situation and make a decision. Repeatedly it demands from the group:

"Eure Maßnahme!" The Agitators' response reflects the difficulty of such a serious decision under this pressure:

Wartet ab!  
 Es ist leicht, das Richtige zu wissen  
 Fern vom Schuß  
 Wenn man Monate Zeit hat  
 Aber wir  
 Hatten zehn Minuten Zeit und  
 Dachten nach vor den Gewehrläufen  
 Und mußten sehen das Gesicht des Unglücklichen  
 Unseres Genossen. (KA 60)

From the very beginning, the delicate nature of the propaganda mission had been made quite clear. The importance of the *Auslöschung* was to conceal the identities of the Agitators, and at that time the *Leiter des Parteihauses* emphasized that no one must be discovered because China would attack the U.S.S.R. Consequently, the Agitators and the Young Comrade declare themselves ". . . bereit, zu sterben und zu verstecken den Toten . . ." (KA 41). In the last scene of *Die Maßnahme*, "Die Grablegung," the group decides that the only way to salvage the propaganda mission and prevent a war is for the Young Comrade to disappear. The Young Comrade, too, is *einverstanden* with his death. When the *Kontrollchor* asks the Agitators if they could have found an alternative, they reply that they could not, given the situation in which

they had to make their decision. Thus the death of the Young Comrade is not punishment or Party discipline. The text reveals the anguish of the Agitators at the prospect of what they must do.

DIE VIER AGITATOREN

Klagend zerschlugen wir uns unsere Köpfe mit unseren Fäusten  
 Daß sie uns nur den furchtbaren Rat wußten: jetzt  
 Abzuschneiden den eigenen Fuß vom Körper; denn  
 Furchtbar ist es, zu töten [sic]. (KA 63)

The Young Comrade dies in agreement with the group's goal of changing the world, yet this makes it no less difficult for the Agitators. The final word of the Kontrollchor on the subject is: "Nicht leicht war es, zu tun, was richtig war" (KA 63). The measure taken is an extreme example of *Einverständnis* of both the Young Comrade and the Agitators. Because it is the right thing to do for the many, it is the only realistic thing to do, given the circumstances of the situation.

With this position, *Die Maßnahme* explores the limits of the morality of absolutes by testing Lenin's definition of relative morality. *Die Maßnahme* shows that the idealistic morality of absolutes no longer holds up when put to the test of social (revolutionary) reality. The death of the Young Comrade is, as the *Kontrollchor* puts it, "nicht leicht." Brecht underscores how awful the measure that must be taken is for the

Agitators; by printing it spaced out, the Agitators' line: "Furchtbar ist es, zu töten," is given added emphasis. Nonetheless, the *Maßnahme* is right. Similarly, in a later play, Brecht's Johanna must admit: "Es hilft nur Gewalt, wo Gewalt herrscht" (*GW* 2: 783). Brecht regards society as exclusive of justice and morality, which the learning play demonstrates by the inhumane conditions under which the Coolies suffer, according to Knopf (*Brecht-Handbuch* 99). From this one can infer that Brecht regards violence as a necessary evil to change a basically violent society (*GW* 18: 184). In such a situation, violence is right, because it is the only effective response to violence. Right and wrong, then are not to be understood as absolute categories, but rather are defined in terms of the "reality" of a given situation and in terms of benefit to the many rather than to the individual. Thus Brecht can write that *Die Maßnahme* relativizes absolute concepts such as justice, freedom and humanity (*GW* 17: 1033).

*Die Maßnahme* marks the end of Brecht's practical occupation with a true *Produzentenkunst*, although the learning play would continue to be of great interest to the playwright for the remainder of his life. In the next chapter Brecht's transition from the *Lehrstücke* to the *Schaustück* will



be discussed: Why does Brecht give up the former in favour of the latter?

What changes in the later dramatic work and what remains the same in terms of the relationship of form and content?

## Chapter Four.

From the *Lehrstück* to the so-called "classical" play: *Die Maßnahme* vs. *Das Leben des Galilei*

Without a doubt, Brecht's *neue Dramatik* undergoes considerable changes from the learning plays to the full-scale plays of the later work. Even a cursory examination of *Das Leben des Galilei* reveals distinct differences between it and *Die Maßnahme* particularly in terms of structure, as has been duly noted in Brecht research to date<sup>1</sup>. Interestingly, in spite of this transition from the learning plays to the full-scale plays, Brecht's concern with the *Lehrstück* never faded. His *Lehrstücktheorie* was not written until 1948, nearly twenty years after the initial work on the learning plays. Moreover, when asked shortly before his death about the shape of theatre to come, Brecht enigmatically replied: "*Die Maßnahme*" (KA 265). This laconic response indicates a puzzling contradiction between Brecht's dramatic theory and practice. If *Die Maßnahme*, a learning play, represents the theatre of the future, why, then,

<sup>1</sup> See Knopf's discussion of the "Phasentheorie," *Brecht-Handbuch* 412-3; Schumacher, *Drama und Geschichte* 851-2; Subiotto 203-204; Klotz 115.

did Brecht decide to give up work on the *Lehrstück* and write plays for the stage? If the learning plays are the theatre of the future, what is the significance of Brecht's full-scale plays? The focus of this chapter is the transition from *Die Maßnahme* to *Das Leben des Galilei*, the reason Brecht moves from the *Lehrstück* to the *Schaustück*, and what this transition entailed for Brecht's *neue Dramatik*.

As discussed above, Brecht's *neue Dramatik* is defined in contrast to traditional, "Aristotelian" theatre<sup>2</sup>. The *neue Dramatik* was intended to revolutionize the traditional theatre by completely reversing its repressive function in society (*GW* 15: 131). Brecht's first experiments in fundamentally refunctioning the theatre were the *Lehrstücke*. But because participants most likely belonged to very specific social groups with a direct interest in this sort of theatre--workers' union groups, schools, and so forth, their effect was limited in that it is rather like preaching to the converted. The learning plays were targeted at but a very small portion of society, while excluding a far greater segment of society, which would still attend the traditional theatre. The problem with *Die Maßnahme* and

<sup>2</sup> See chapter 2, pages 14-7.

the other learning plays was that they bypassed the theatre apparatus altogether; hence they could not possibly have any effect upon the theatre as an institution. In time, however, it became clear to Brecht that such a qualitative change of the institution theatre was impossible, due to its class character. He realized that as a cultural component of the predominant bourgeois ideology, the theatre as an institution could only be truly altered through social revolution (*GW* 15: 223). The theatrical medium, regardless of any "revolutionary" direction, isolated from the mainstream theatre, could not bring about a radical change of the basis.

The answer to the question of the transition from *Die Maßnahme* to *Das Leben des Galilei* is provided by Brecht's notes on "Die Große Pädagogik und die Kleine Pädagogik." Brecht's *Große Pädagogik* is a theatrical model in which the system of actor and audience no longer exists. Only the actor as a "Studierender" has a role in the play. The basic rule of this model is "Wo das Interesse des einzelnen das Interesse des Staates ist, bestimmt die begriffene Geste die Handlungsweisen des einzelnen." On the other hand, *Die Kleine Pädagogik* is a theatrical model of the transitional period of the first revolution; it leads only to the

democratization of the theatre. In it, the division between actors and audience remains, but the theatre apparatus is used to activate the audience and weaken bourgeois ideology<sup>3</sup> (*BFA* 21: 396; Steinweg, *Brechts Modell* 51).

According to this scheme, the learning plays seem to fall under the rubric of the *Große Pädagogik*, while the full-scale plays of the later work belong to the *Kleine Pädagogik*. With this categorization, Brecht suggests that the *Lehrstück* was ahead of its time. As a number of scholars have argued, *Die Maßnahme* presupposes a future socialist order of complete symbiosis between the interests of the state and the individual. But the conditions for this type of theatre are not yet given; Brecht recognizes the prematurity of the *Lehrstück* at this particular juncture in our cultural-historical development (Steinweg, *Das Lehrstück* 207; Mennemaier 308; Knopf, *Brecht-Handbuch* 422). The wider implication of this, as Knopf points out, is that the learning plays are not a step in the development toward the full-scale plays. Instead the full-scale plays are a step toward

<sup>3</sup> According to Jan Knopf, Brecht sees in the full-scale plays a modernization of the traditional theatre. The plays of the later work are not revolutionary, however. At best the full-scale plays can show contradictions between bourgeois ideology and praxis, and so provide a challenge to the same (*Brecht-Handbuch* 435).

the revolution, which will facilitate the real *Funktionswechsel* of the theatre to the *Lehrstück* (432).

This understanding of the learning play would explain the transition from the *Lehrstück* to the full-scale play. Brecht was forced to conclude that the real *Funktionswechsel* of the theatre institution was impossible, and conceded that the best alternative at this particular time is to change dramatic praxis (*GW* 15: 224; *BFA* 21: 443). While the revolutionization of the theatre was impossible, Brecht's *neue Dramatik* changed the social function of the theatre nevertheless, by using the traditional theatre apparatus in a new way: "Neues Theater machen bedeutet mit dem vorhandenen Theater einen gesellschaftlichen *Funktionswechsel* vollziehen; bestimmte theatralische Mittel werden neuen Aufgaben zugeführt, somit alten entführt" (*GW* 15: 314-5). By using the drama in such a way as to socially activate the audience, the conventional theatre would gain a new function in society. At this stage in our cultural-historical development, Brecht recognized, *Schaustücke* could have a more positive, progressive impact upon the theatre institution than the *Lehrstücke*. This new focus on the play as a means of changing the

function of the theatre as an institution accounts for Brecht's move from *Die Maßnahme* to *Das Leben des Galilei*.

*Das Leben des Galilei* was written during Brecht's Svendborger exile in 1938 in support of the German resistance to the Nazi regime. After 1945, Brecht saw in the story of Galileo a certain parallel to the profound destruction caused by this creation of "advanced" technology in the atomic weapons, and the play was reworked and adapted to reflect this new social message (GW 17: 1106). The greatest difference between *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* is that in the latter, Brecht returned to the theatre apparatus he had once rejected in favour of a *Produzentenkunst*. Brecht himself refers to *Galilei* as a technical step backwards in that with just some minor adjustments, it could be played in the conventional manner (GW 17: 1125). Yet this "return" to the traditional theatre in *Leben des Galilei* is by no means to be understood as a retraction of his *neue Dramatik*. On the contrary, this "return" to the traditional theatre entails a progression beyond it; in the later work, Brecht lays new claim to the conventional theatre insofar as its apparatus becomes a means for social enlightenment and activation. The transition

from the *Lehrstücke* to the full-scale plays represents a *Produktiv-machen* of the theatre apparatus, insofar as Brecht is able to incorporate his experience with the learning plays with elements of the traditional drama.

This renewed use of the apparatus in the *Schaustücke* meant at the same time a shift in focus from *Produzentenkunst* to *Zuschauerkunst*. While *Die Maßnahme* is a brief dramatic exercise intended for the participants only, *Leben des Galilei* is more akin to the traditional drama in that it is designed for performance before an audience over the course of an evening. Thus the audience gains a role in *Das Leben des Galilei* that it lacked in *Die Maßnahme*. This new shift in emphasis to the audience in the full-scale plays is reflected in the dramatic theory of the later work, particularly the *Kleines Organon*. After the learning plays, Brecht develops his concept of the progressive stage-audience dynamic. This *Zuschauerkunst* is based upon *Verfremdung*; accordingly, the construction of the *Schaustücke* had to be tailored to effect *Verfremdung* between play and audience, so that the audience might take a critical stance to society as it is portrayed on the stage. Consequently, *Das Leben des Galilei* differs from *Die Maßnahme* in its dramatic structure in a



number of ways. These differences between the *Lehrstücke* and the *Schaustücke* pertain to a number of structural elements: realism, epic elements used as *V-effekte* (chorus), lyric elements used as *V-effekte* (songs and verse), language, plot, and, lastly, characterization and *Einführung*.

*Das Leben des Galilei* illustrates a much stronger realism than *Die Maßnahme*. The *Lehrstück* can be understood as part of Brecht's reaction to the illusionism of naturalistic theatre. He saw in the theatre apparatus the danger of illusion, which would hinder the audience from critical, objective thought. By avoiding the conventional theatre apparatus, the possibility of illusion was eliminated. The result is a spartanness of realistic detail to the point of abstraction in the learning plays because they, like *Die Maßnahme*, have a singular focus on the participants' behaviour. By the time he writes *Das Leben des Galilei*, however, Brecht had explored the possibilities of the apparatus and how it might be productively used. He discovered that when used in combination with *V-effekte*, the apparatus could be used to create realistic theatre, without necessarily creating the illusion of "real life" on the stage as it would in

naturalistic theatre. Since Brecht's *neue Dramatik* seeks to portray social realities in such a way as to activate the audience in their everyday lives, it only made sense for the theatre to reflect more accurately the complexity of life. This new descriptive realism could serve only to enhance the effectiveness of epic theatre. Life, experience and history, all lend a stronger relevance to the later plays, to which people can more easily relate. As a result of this, as well as in the interest of historical accuracy, *Das Leben des Galilei* is characterized by a realism not evident in *Die Maßnahme*. Whereas in *Die Maßnahme*, for example, there are no stage directions, nor is any additional information given about individual scenes, in *Galilei*, by contrast, Brecht carefully determines the tone and setting of each scene by supplying the audience with dates, and locations, besides providing an abundance of stage directions. As the play begins, the title and introductory verse inform the reader or viewer of the general place and time; the scene takes place in Padua in the year 1609. Stage directions provide information about the exact setting, time and characters. As the first scene opens in his "ärmliche" study in Padua, Galilei appears "prustend und fröhlich" at his morning wash.

At the same time, this added dimension of realism in the later plays contributes toward the *Zuschauerkunst*. Realistic detail is necessary to ensure the audience's critical distance to the play. "Das Feld muß in seiner historischen Relativität gekennzeichnet werden können," Brecht notes in the *Kleines Organon* (GW 16: 678). When the historicity of a given dramatical situation is clearly defined, it becomes more difficult for the audience to identify with the event or characters portrayed. Situations and events portrayed in the drama are not shown as relative or general, but as specific to one particular historical time and place. This forces the audience to take a position to the action and to consider critically alternatives to what the play shows. Hence Brecht reiterates in the notes to the play that the background should show not only Galilei's immediate surroundings, but also his historical environment (GW 17: 1124). Galilei is shown in a specific historical period and situation--as a scientist in feudal Italy. Therefore the audience can consider whether Galilei could have acted differently under the circumstances. The events of the eleventh scene suggest that this is so. The iron smelter Vanni offers Galilei a means of escape from his imminent arrest, but the scientist

refuses, unwilling to believe that he is in danger until it is too late (*GW* 3: 1318). By showing that Galilei made a conscious choice to act as he did, Brecht fosters a critical attitude on the part of the audience toward his character.

*Das Leben des Galilei* represents a departure from *Die Maßnahme* in terms of the way that epic and lyric elements are used as *V-effekte*. In *Die Maßnahme*, Brecht used epic devices such as the court scene, the play in the play, and a chorus to recount the story. These epic devices thus create historical, and thus critical distance to the events portrayed.

Because of the increased realism of the full-scale plays and the fact that the historical material could not be manipulated to the same degree as the *Maßnahme*'s abstract plot, Brecht draws upon different structural methods. To create historical distance and comment upon the action, Brecht uses brief verse as well as projected titles at the beginnings of scenes. These summarize the content of the following scene, which detracts from dramatic tension, as in the first scene of *Galilei*:

In dem Jahr sechzehnhundertundneun  
 Schien das Licht des Wissens hell  
 Zu Padua aus einem kleinen Haus.  
 Galileo Galilei rechnete aus:  
 Die Sonn steht still, die Erd kommt von der Stell. (*GW* 3: 1231)

As a result of the increased realism of the full-scale plays, songs are no longer used as *V-effekte* to the same extent as in the learning plays.

Inserted at intervals to break up play by changing the pace in *Die Maßnahme*, songs simultaneously comment on the action and serve as an emotional outlet for the participants. Instead of interrupting the dramatic action, songs in *Galilei* are organically incorporated into the plot. Thus in the tenth scene of the play, the ballads of the Mardi Gras processions reflect the potential social impact of Galilei's science. The final word is that the scientist is a "Bibelzertrümmerer" because his findings will radically change the way people view the world (GW 3:1316).

In keeping with the different focus of the later work, the language of *Das Leben des Galilei* differs markedly from that of the *Die Maßnahme*. Repetition and stylized language in *Die Maßnahme* help to participants concentrate upon the patterns of behaviour instead of characters' words. The realism of the later work is expressed in *Galilei* through colourful, lively language and far more "natural" dialogue than in *Die Maßnahme*. The new ease in the language of *Das Leben des Galilei* is well illustrated by the first scene of the play.

GALILEI Hast du, was ich dir gestern sagte, inzwischen begriffen?

ANDREA Was? Das mit dem Kippernikus seinem Drehen?

GALILEI Ja.

ANDREA Nein. Warum wollen Sie denn, daß ich es begreife? Es ist schwer, und ich bin im Oktober erst elf. (GW 3: 1235)

The interchange between the scientist and the small boy is remarkably true-to-life. Galilei, the teacher, probes to see what Andrea has remembered of yesterday's lesson. Andrea's unsophisticated reference to Copernicus' heliocentric theory and protest that he is too young to understand such things result in a passage characterized by a tangible warmth and humour. This palpable feeling would be gratuitous and distracting in the learning plays, at the core of which is a theoretical *Lehrproblem*.

The shift in focus from the actors to the audience affects the *Fabel*, or plot, in that it gains new importance in the full-scale plays. *Die Maßnahme*, like the other learning plays, has an abstract plot, which provides a model for a discussion of the focal issue of the play. The brevity and simplicity of the plot of *Die Maßnahme* reflects its minimal function. Mimesis is less significant in *Die Maßnahme* than consciousness-raising about actors' attitudes and behaviour. In the later dramatic work, however, the *Fabel* is fleshed out as one of most important

aspects of the play, in terms of both form and content. As Brecht puts it in the *Kleines Organon*, the plot is the "Herzstück" of the drama, the "Gesamtkomposition aller gestischen Vorgänge, enthaltend die Mitteilungen und Impulse, die das Vergnügen des Publikums ausmachen" (*GW* 16: 693). Narrating a series of events is only one function of the plot in Brecht's *neue Dramatik*; between the lines, the plot holds the social message of the play (*GW* 16: 693). As a result of this added function, plot acquires a new complexity in the *Schaustücke*, such that the plot loses the abstractness that characterized *Die Maßnahme*. Instead, Brecht begins to draw upon historical and literary sources for his production of plays, as illustrated by *Das Leben des Galilei*. Apparently, Brecht did a great deal of research on the life of Galileo prior to writing the play, so as to remain as close to the historical biography as possible, while incorporating a contemporary parallel.<sup>4</sup> So while Brecht uses the plot to recount the events leading up to and after Galilei's recantation of the heliocentric theory, more importantly, he uses the plot to show a more current

<sup>4</sup> See Knopf, *Brecht-Handbuch* 160-1.

problem. At the same time, the plot treats the responsibility of the scientist to society in the atomic age.

*Das Leben des Galilei* differs from *Die Maßnahme* in its overall dramatic construction. Unlike the montage based structure of the learning plays, in which scenes could be played individually or additional scenes could be inserted as needed, Brecht's full-scale plays, *Das Leben des Galilei* in particular, are constructed more like the conventional drama. In "Form und Einfühlung," Schumacher argues that the rather traditional form of *Das Leben des Galilei* is due to the historical material. Because Brecht could not manipulate the material experimentally and maintain the same historical accuracy, the play's structure is organic, instead of based upon montage (154-55). As a historical chronicle (Cohen 115) Galilei's story must be recounted in its entirety; scenes follow one upon the other in *Das Leben des Galilei*. But whereas in the traditional theatre, the forward dynamic of the scenes is designed to create dramatic tension, Brecht attempts to preclude this tension in his *neue Dramatik*. According to Brecht, the manner of doing this is to connect individual events so that the knots become noticeable; "Die Geschehnisse dürfen sich nicht



unmerklich folgen, sondern man muß mit dem Urteil dazwischenkommen können." One way this is done in *Das Leben des Galilei* is through the use of titles that contain the social point of each scene. They reduce dramatic tension by summarizing what is to follow (*GW* 16: 694). In this way, the content of the first scene of *Das Leben des Galilei* is summarized: "Galileo Galilei, Lehrer der Mathematik zu Padua, will das neue kopernikanische Weltsystem beweisen." (*GW* 3: 1231).

Characterization similarly reflects the shift in emphasis from actor to the audience in the transition from *Lehrstück* to *Schaustück*. Characters are considerably more developed in *Das Leben des Galilei* than in *Die Maßnahme*. In *Die Maßnahme*, this lack of character development served the purpose of underlining the learning problem of *Einverständnis*. Due to the brevity and narrow scope of the learning plays, the number of characters in them and the extent to which they were developed as individual figures was minimal. In keeping with the play's concentration on raising players' awareness of their own behaviour and attitudes, none of the figures that appear in *Die Maßnahme*, most notably the Young Comrade, actually appear on the "stage." Instead, their actions are

"shown" by the four Agitators as they account for the measure taken. In the *Lehrstücke*, characters are only significant insofar as they present models of behaviour, which aid actors in learning about their own attitudes and behaviour.

By contrast, several times as many characters appear in *Das Leben des Galilei* as in *Die Maßnahme* (over fifty-six in *Galilei* as opposed to four in *Die Maßnahme*). As a result of the increased realism in the *Schaustücke*, in *Galilei*, Brecht creates much fuller characters than in the learning play. Because the work is an adaptation of historical events, the necessary characters were for the most part already given. Brecht had only to reinforce their individual physiognomies according to the social message of the play. The playwright supplies the audience with information about characters and their actions in the form of stage directions. The purpose of this increased character development is to make contradictions in the actions of dramatic figures noticeable and strange, thus provoking critical thought about them. For this reason, a particularly clear picture of the character of Galilei, one of the greatest and certainly the most developed of Brecht's "heroes," is painted from the

very start of the play. Possessed of a phenomenal intelligence and vitality, the scientist pursues his research and learning for the pure pleasure that it gives him. This association of learning and pleasure in Galilei's fundamental realism are a concretization of the Renaissance ideals Brecht's *neue Dramatik* should restore to the theatre. The scientist's *neues Sehen*, based upon doubt and empirical evidence and his belief in the power of reason all underline his connection to the Renaissance (Knopf, *Brecht-Handbuch* 162-3). Galilei regards the world of seventeenth-century Italy, which should be familiar to him, as alien and contradictory. In this way, Galilei expresses the "critical attitude" that the *neue Dramatik* seeks to provoke in the audience (*GW* 17: 1127; Rohrmoser 407).

Related to the more fully developed characterization in *Das Leben des Galilei* over the *Lehrstücke* is perhaps the greatest difference of all between the learning plays and the later work: Brecht's view of *Einfühlung* or identification in the theatre changes from *Die Maßnahme* to *Das Leben des Galilei*. The latter demonstrates Brecht's acceptance of *Einfühlung* as a dramatic tool, even in the *neue Dramatik*. In Brecht's

initial treatises on the "culinary" theatre, he sharply critiqued identification as a dramatic category. His hypothesis was that identification could not be used the basis of the dramatic experience if one takes a critical attitude to characters and the "world" portrayed in the drama, which is precisely what his *neue Dramatik* seeks to promote. In its place, the principle of *Verfremdung* would become the basis of the dramatic experience in Brecht's epic theatre (*GW* 15: 299-301).

*Die Maßnahme* represents this total rejection of *Einfühlung* in that there is no room for it in the *Lehrstück*: characters are deliberately kept "flat," and further, there is no audience to identify with the characters. In time, however, Brecht softens his stance to identification in the drama, conceding that it can be used at times in epic theatre. During rehearsal, in particular, actors can use identification to learn more about characters they are to demonstrate (*GW* 16: 853). But in *Das Leben des Galilei*, Brecht seems to have realized that a certain identification with his character of Galilei was unavoidable even in performance, as indicated by the following excerpt from his *Arbeitsjournal*:

die einzigen schwierigkeiten bereitet die letzte szene . . . selbst der unbedenklich sich einfühlende muß zumindest jetzt, auf dem weg der

einführung selber in den galilei, den v-effekt verspüren. bei streng  
epischer darstellung kommt eine einführung erlaubter art zustande [sic].  
(1: 35)

The necessary *V-effekt* or *Kunstgriff* that Brecht refers to is Galilei's response to Andrea Sarti's rationalization of the former's recantation. The older scientist replies to the younger with a "mörderische Analyse" of his behaviour, in which is definitively revealed how great and how despicable Galilei is. On the one hand, the scientist is able to analyse detachedly the circumstances and condemn his own actions; yet on the other hand, by doing so, the full social impact of his egotistical action is made clear.<sup>5</sup>

The "einführung erlaubter art" suggests a concession on Brecht's part that identification with the character of Galilei is acceptable because the *Kunstgriff* of the penultimate scene would ensure a certain critical distance from the character. Brecht's notes to *Die Mutter* help to explain what Brecht understands by "acceptable identification." "Diese [nicht-aristotelische Dramatik] bedient sich der *hingebenden Einführung* der Zuschauer keineswegs so unbedenklich wie die aristotelische . . . (GW 17: 1036). Brecht is against *hingebende Einführung*, but he does not reject

<sup>5</sup> See also Käthe Rülicke, "Bemerkungen zur Schlußszene," Hecht, *Materialien* 91-152.

*Einführung* out of hand. His criticism of identification in "Über eine nicht-aristotelische Dramatik" demonstrates at the same time that identification can have a productive use as a dramatic principle. Brecht writes "Kam der Verkehr zwischen Bühne und Publikum auf der Basis der Einführung zustande, dann konnte der Zuschauer nur jeweils so viel sehen, wie der Held sah, in den er sich einfühlte" (GW 15: 299). He continues that *Einführung* can be used in the theatre, depending upon the situation. "Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe verwendet für die Figur der Johanna Dark weitgehend Effekte der Einführung. Und das geschieht auch für die Rolle der Frau Carrar." He adds that these roles are not wholly based upon identification, but moreso than others (GW 15: 314). In "Form und Einführung," Schumacher makes note of this and rightly concludes that so long as the hero goes through a learning process, identification with the hero is productive in that the subject also takes part in this process (167). Audience identification with Galilei is acceptable, because his character embodies the critical attitude that the *neue Dramatik* seeks to promote in the audience. It is also acceptable because finally,

Galilei's "mörderische Analyse" ensures that the audience will view his situation as critically as he.

With *Das Leben des Galilei*, Brecht finds that the basis of the traditional drama--identification--against which he once so vehemently protested, could prove productive when coupled with alienation techniques. On another level, the repressive theatre apparatus proves a means of socially activating the audience when the drama has *Verfremdung* as its foundation. Ultimately, the transition of Brecht's *neue Dramatik* from the *Lehrstücke* to the *Schaustücke* comes full circle in the productive renewal of the apparatus in Brecht's full-scale plays.

## Chapter Five:

Brecht's *Lehrstücke* and his Full-scale plays: Not so Different After All

Reexamination of Brecht's transition from *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei*, as outlined in the last chapter, revealed that the greatest difference between the *Lehrstücke* and the *Schaustücke* is the shift in focus from the actors to the audience. Accordingly, Brecht modifies the construction of the full-scale play in a number of ways to better accommodate the critical involvement and activation of the audience.

In fact, however, the structural differences between the learning plays and the full-scale plays of Brecht's later work are not so far-reaching at all. Instead these variables indicate a more complex relationship between the two periods of Brecht's dramatic work. No doubt *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* demonstrate certain differences in structure, yet these are merely adjustments to the use Brecht makes of the traditional theatre apparatus in the later plays. More important than these variations are the striking and fundamental similarities of structural method between the phases of Brecht's progression as a dramatist. These similarities of structure reflect not a difference in the content, but a unity



of purpose in the *Lehrstück* and the *Schaustück*. In this chapter, *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* will be examined for structural similarities so as to determine the constants that essentially define Brecht's dramatic method and purpose.

Perhaps the best illustration of the complex relationship between Brecht's *Lehrstücke* and *Schaustücke* is the equally complex dramatic principle of *Verfremdung* or alienation, which represents the central structuring principle in his *neue Dramatik* (GW 15: 346). By making events and typical behaviour unusual to the audience, *Verfremdung* is for Brecht ". . . der Beginn der Kritik" (GW 16: 679). The criticism alienation provokes is the key to recognition and understanding not only of the processes of social reality portrayed in the drama, but also to everyday social realities and potential change thereof. Thus Brecht writes "Im Provokatorischem sehen wir die Realität wieder hergestellt" (GW 17: 1008).

*Verfremdung* is not only the "aesthetic organizing principle" of the *Lehrstücke*, as Klaus-Detlev Müller argues (147), but also plays the central structuring role in the *Schaustücke* of Brecht's later work. The

playwright achieves dramatic alienation in both *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* through application of similar *V-effekte*, including in particular historicization, application of montage techniques, and acting method.

In both *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei*, historicization is perhaps the most significant contributor to dramatic alienation. Portraying present events in past garb holds certain important advantages for the playwright. On the one hand, the audience can identify less readily with historically bound situations and characters than with immediate, contemporary ones, and is thus more inclined to criticism of the same than it might be otherwise (*GW* 16: 678-69). On the other hand, situations are shown as historically relative; the transitoriness of the past demonstrates the transitoriness of the present, and hence its inherent changeability. "Verfremden heißt also Historisieren, heißt Vorgänge und Personen als historisch, also als vergänglich darzustellen" (*GW* 15: 304). In the learning play *Die Maßnahme*, historicization was particularly necessary because of the explosive and immediate nature of the plot. Consequently, Brecht fashions *Die Maßnahme* as a play within a play.

The framework of the play is set as the Agitators report to the *Kontrollchor* of their mission in China; within this framework they act out the events that ultimately led to the death of the Young Comrade. By showing the Young Comrade's incorrect political behaviour as historically removed, the play demonstrates to the actor that this behaviour can be changed. Similarly, historicization has an equally important role as an alienation effect in Brecht's later plays. In *Das Leben des Galilei*, historical biography provided Brecht with a *Stoff* that was highly relevant for the modern world: the story of the great [and as Brecht would have it, potentially socially influential] man of science who retracts his proved theories under pressure from the Church. Brecht uses this historical material to illustrate a very modern problem--the responsibility of the scientist to society for his research. In the historical-biographical context, Brecht treats the contemporary parallel of the social obligation of the atomic scientist so as to show the immediate problem as past, and thus changeable.

Montage is another structural device Brecht uses to achieve *Verfremdung* in both *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei*. The

shock value of this technique helps to destroy any illusion the audience may have that they are watching anything more than a play. Brecht applies this technique through juxtaposition of perspective and contrasting literary modes: dramatic, epic and lyric (Metscher 143-4). The dramatic presentation of the plot is interrupted by a narrator or chorus, projections of titles and/or historical facts, and verse, thus emphasizing the episodic nature of scenes. According to Brecht, events or episodes should be strung together in such a way " . . . daß die Knoten auffällig werden." This provides the audience with the opportunity to reflect before proceeding to the next scene (*GW* 16: 694). The use of alternating literary modes is readily apparent in *Die Maßnahme*. As a political oratorio, the play's central focus is the chorus or *Kontrollchor*. From it step the four members who narrate the story of the propaganda mission in China by acting it out. Interspersed between the Agitators' report are songs, as well as discussion segments regarding the validity of the Agitators' and the Young Comrade's actions. This continual change from one literary mode to another helps to keep the audience or participants critically thinking about the play and its *Lehrproblem*. Likewise Brecht

uses varying perspective and literary modes to maintain critical distance between the audience and the action in *Das Leben des Galilei*, if not in exactly the same manner as in *Die Maßnahme*. To distinguish one scene from another, Brecht draws upon both epic and lyric elements; each scene bears a title that summarizes the action to follow, and all, with the exception of scenes 10 and 12, begin with a brief verse that suggests the social implications of the scene's events. Lyric and epic elements are also incorporated into the dramatic in the tenth scene, in which a balladeer appears as part of the Shrove Tuesday celebrations of 1632, singing of the "Bibelzertrümmerer" Galilei. The change from dramatic action to song provides both a change in perspective and a commentary on the social effects of Galilei's astronomical findings.

Instruments of alienation in both *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* entail not only historicization and montage, but also acting method. If the measure of acting in Brecht's contemporary drama is portraying a character so convincingly that the audience nearly forgets they are subject to a play, the measure of acting in Brecht's plays is exactly the opposite. Here, rather than disappearing behind roles, the actors "show" them.

Actors do not "become one" with their characters, but "quote" the characters (*GW* 15: 374). At all times it should be obvious that actors are demonstrating roles, and the actions of characters should be shown in such a way as to be noticeable. That is, they should imply not only what the characters actually do, but also what they choose not to do. In this way, the actors suggest that the characters must not behave in a certain manner, but have alternatives. The actors contribute to the audience's critical attitude in that they show that situations and events can be influenced (*GW* 16: 688). In *Die Maßnahme*, the actor's method of showing a character has its most radical expression in the play within the play. The Agitators don and discard their roles like masks as they alternately demonstrate their actions and those of the Young Comrade. In the framework of the *Lehrstück*, the possibilities of alternate behaviour are verbalized in the discussion sections between the chorus and the four Agitators. Possible alternative action is similarly underlined in *Das Leben des Galilei*.<sup>1</sup> Galileo is presented as one who consciously chooses to act in certain ways. In Galilei's last scene the route not taken becomes painfully

<sup>1</sup> See also Rohrmoser 410.

evident with his self-condemnation of his recantation. He affirms with the "mörderische Analyse" that he did not have to publicly deny the truth, and that the outcome of his actions would have meant social progress instead of reaction.

*Verfremdung* has a unique function in both the learning plays and the full-scale plays of Brecht's later work. Brecht uses *Verfremdung* in the play to provoke in the actor or spectator a certain critical attitude, which Brecht describes as dialectical thinking: "klar, daß das theater der verfremdung ein theater der dialektik ist. . . ." By means of *V-effekte*, the *neue Dramatik* shows the inherent processual and contradictory nature of reality: ". . . der v-effekt macht diese dialektische natur darstellbar, das ist seine aufgabe; durch sie erklärt er sich" (*AJ* 1: 216). Brecht's reason for using the term *Verfremdung* instead of dialectics was that it would be simpler for theatre people to understand dialectics on the basis of alienation theatre than alienation theatre on the basis of dialectics. As Ley puts it, for Brecht the dialectic " . . . negates the logic of 'common sense' on which the reality of the present order is based." For Brecht the dialectical method is both a critical and a productive way of looking at the

world because it bursts the confines of conventional thinking by questioning knowledge commonly taken for granted (Ley 207-11). Thus the dialectic is, as Brecht puts it, the "beste Totengräberin bürgerlicher Ideen und Institutionen" (*GW* 15: 212). Through this critical attitude fostered by *V-effekte* in the play, the audience learns to see beyond apparent reality to what it "really" is. Only when the audience or actors are able to view reality in this way can they criticize and alter social realities (Ley 171, 175-77). "Erzeugen heißt aber Verändern. Es bedeutet Einflußnahme, Addieren. . . . Man kann der Natur befehlen, indem man ihr gehorcht, wie Bacon sagt" (*GW* 16: 921).

Several scholars conclude that for Brecht, dialectics constitute essentially a dramaturgical principle of the later work and theory in that it shows contradictions in social processes depicted on stage, thus contributing to social-critical knowledge (M.J. Fischer 186, 197; Voigts 171-82). T.W.H. Metscher also singles out the structure of Brecht's "mature" work as based upon dialectics:

They [the three aspects of dialectics] do, in fact, constitute the basic aesthetic categories of construction in these plays. The aspect of factual reality is reflected in the element of descriptive realism, or realistic mimesis, the aspect of negation in the techniques of alienation, the



aspect of solution in the element of anticipation which his plays explicitly or implicitly contain (141).

While Fischer, Voigts and Metscher's argument is certainly valid for Brecht's later plays, it omits the fact that dialectics are equally important in terms of structure in the *Lehrstücke*. According to Brecht's *Lehrstücktheorie*, the *V-effekt* is vital to the learning plays, and the *V-effekt* is designed to coach the actors or audience in the dialectical way of viewing society (GW 17: 1024; KA 253). The descriptive realism of *Galilei* represents a necessary departure from the learning plays in the interest of the *Zuschauerkunst*, as has been discussed. Nonetheless the three steps of the dialectic--thesis, antithesis, and synthesis--are still part of the structure of the *Lehrstücke*. The moment of "factual reality" consists of the parameters of the theoretical problem; the moment of negation comprises *V-effekte* in the *Lehrstück*. Lastly, the moment of solution exists insofar as the actors gain awareness of their own behaviour through the learning play. Hence, the materialist dialectic is as much the main aesthetic structural principle of Brecht's learning plays as of his later work.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See also Müller 148, 238.

Metscher also avers that dialectics are expressed in Brecht's plays through the idea that every problematic situation has a different solution, and that what matters is doing what is possible to resolve that situation (140). Certainly this is nowhere more the case than in the *Maßnahme*, which is meant as an exercise in dialectics, as Brecht underlines in a 1956 conversation with Pierre Abraham (qtd. in *KA* 261). In the *Maßnahme*, an extreme scenario is clearly defined in which one solution is the Young Comrade's death. The participants in the play have the task of determining the necessity of this action through collective play and critical evaluation (Müller 155). Thus the dialectic, as Metscher understands it, is expressed in the structure of *Die Maßnahme*. Ultimately, the Agitators and the *Kontrollchor* come to the conclusion that the measure taken was the only possible solution to their situation; it would be up to participants to work out the contradictions in this solution.

While the dialectical method figures prominently in the structure of *Das Leben des Galilei*, it supplies at the same time the underlying theme of the play (Ley 204). In the play the *große Methode* of historical materialism appears as Galilei's scientific view of the world. He

approaches phenomena to be studied with skepticism and wonder, as if seeing them for the first time (*ver-fremd-et*), which fosters criticism.

Because he leaves the intellectual baggage of the past behind, he is open to new insights. Particularly in the fourth scene it is obvious how his perspective runs counter to that of his contemporaries. The mathematician and philosopher who call on Galilei cling stubbornly to the Ptolemaic scheme of the universe, refusing to even look through the telescope at any heavenly bodies that do not fit into their world view. When the philosopher accuses him of lack of sound reasoning, Galilei retorts: "Die Wahrheit ist ein Kind der Zeit, nicht der Autorität" (*GW* 3: 1269). Ley shows that Brecht lifts this line almost directly from Bacon's *Novum Organum* and that it corresponds closely to Brecht's understanding of the world as historical. Truth or knowledge is relative to the moment in time in which it is discovered; until then, it exists but on a plane of reality that is not readily apparent (211-12). Galilei's method represents the inductive reasoning of Bacon and Descartes which conflicts with the widely accepted Aristotelian deductive logic. The revolutionary potential of this *neues Sehen* is underscored by the Church's determination that it be

contained.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, this is precisely Brecht's view, since only by questioning accepted knowledge is real intellectual and social progress possible.

The central significance of the dialectic to the structure of Brecht's *neue Dramatik* reflects the constitutive socialist realism of his work. Werner Mittenzwei comments on Brecht's realism: "Mit der *Maßnahme* und der *Mutter* vollzog Brecht zu Beginn der dreißiger Jahre den Übergang zur sozialistischen Dramatik" (246). But not until such plays as *Furcht und Elend des dritten Reiches* and *Die Gewehre der Frau Carrar*, Mittenzwei adds, is Brecht's dramatic work characterized by socialist realism. Mittenzwei's position is problematic because he presumes that while the later plays are realistic in Brecht's definition of the term, the learning plays are not. Clearly this is not the case. As Matthias-Johannes Fischer also points out, socialist realism was the basis for all of Brecht's dramatic production since the late 1920s (192; *GW* 16: 935). The entire point of these exercises in dialectics is for the participants to analyze and challenge traditional behavioural patterns as to their relevance in modern

<sup>3</sup> See also Cohen 125.

society. Thus, through criticism in play, the *Lehrstück* provides participants with the opportunity to look critically at and to modify the reality of their own behaviour. In *Die Maßnahme*, the dialectical connection between play and reality is established through parodies of traditional behaviours, most notably that of the Young Comrade, to provoke the participants to criticism of these behaviours both in the play and beyond in "real" life.

Mittenzwei's choice of words constitute an additional problem of his comments on Brecht and realism. Mittenzwei describes certain Brecht plays as examples of "socialist realism." This is confusing, as it suggests erroneously that Brecht adhered to the official Communist art doctrine of socialist realism, when, in fact, he vigorously opposed it. In the *Expressionismusdebatte* with the venerable Communist literary critic Lukacs, Brecht critiques the party aesthetic dogma as Formalism. Particularly in the later theory, Brecht does refer to his own brand of realism as socialist realism, but this is something quite different from the Party protocol. As Brecht defines it, socialist realism is "eine wirklichkeitsgetreue Wiedergabe des Zusammenlebens der Menschen vom

sozialistischen Standpunkt aus, mit den Mitteln der Kunst. Die Wiedergabe ist von der Art, daß Einsichten in das soziale Getriebe gewährt und sozialistische Impulse erzeugt werden" (*GW* 16: 935).

Instead, Brecht's definition of socialist realism indicates a new relationship between art and society; aesthetic realism gains a new socio-political role in Brecht's art, in that it indirectly contributes toward a society more in keeping with the humanitarian goals of socialism. Both *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* are characterized by socialist realism as Brecht defines it. As part of the *neue Dramatik*, both the *Lehrstück* and the *Schaustück* look to affecting the behaviour of the participants or audience as they function in society (*BFA* 21: 562).

All of these similarities of structural method between *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei*--*Verfremdung*, certain V-effekte, and ultimately, dialectics--point to a more fundamental characteristic common to Brecht's plays. In his ongoing attempt to change the social function of the theatre, Brecht fashions not only the *Lehrstück*, but also the *Schaustück* as pedagogical theatre. Even prior to the learning plays, Brecht had redefined the new purpose of art as pedagogy, and this

remained the direction of his *neue Dramatik* for the duration of his dramatic career.

As pedagogical experiments, the *Lehrstücke* have often been understood as strictly didactic in contrast to the the full-scale plays of Brecht's later work. In the *Lehrstücktheorie*, Brecht emphasizes the necessity of combining active and speculative elements in the play to effect a learning process on the part of the actors (*GW* 17: 1022-3). This learning process, however, is not only restricted to the learning plays, but is equally a fundamental part of the full-scale plays, as the *Zuschauerkunst* brings about the critical involvement and activation of the audience. The importance of the learning process in both plays does not, however, mean that Brecht's dramatic work is purely rationalistic and didactic. By its very aesthetic nature, theatre is "heiter," Brecht affirms, drawing upon Horace's adage (*GW* 15: 120). In "Über eine nicht-aristotelische Dramatik" he comments further upon learning and enjoyment in the theatre: "Das Theater bleibt Theater, auch wenn es Lehrtheater ist, und soweit es gutes Theater ist, bleibt es amüsant" (*GW* 15: 267).

With this renewed emphasis upon learning, Brecht's *neue Dramatik* draws on the Enlightenment tradition of Diderot and Lessing. Brecht restores the connection between the constitutive elements of drama--*prodesse* and *delectare*--which had become so polarized in the "culinary" drama as to exclude the element of productive learning from the play. Consequently, the *Lehrstück* by its very designation emphasized not the entertainment value of the play, but the play's productive potential for learning. Yet Brecht understands the connection between productive learning and entertainment differently from his Enlightenment predecessors. The *Lehreffekt* of the play is not a bitter pill to be disguised with an entertaining sugar-coating, but rather directly constitutes the *Vergnügen*, or enjoyment of the play. *Vergnügen* in the *neue Dramatik* correlates directly to the understanding the drama provides about the wider connections within society. "Es ist eine Lust unseres Zeitalters, alles so zu begreifen, daß wir eingreifen können" (*GW* 16: 682). According to Brecht, learning about the processes and contradictions of society is eminently enjoyable for modern individuals, as it empowers them to change and better their social environment (*GW* 16: 924). Thus



Brecht concludes "daß ein bestimmtes Lernen das wichtigste Vergnügen unseres Zeitalters ist, so daß es in unserem Theater eine große Stellung einnehmen muß" (GW 16: Anmerkungen 8).

Examination of the structural methods Brecht makes use of throughout his plays demonstrates that his epic-dialectical theatre is essentially deictic. The next chapter will compare *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* in terms of content, so as to determine the relationship of structural method to message in Brecht's *neue Dramatik*.

## Chapter Six:

### Brecht after the *Wende*

Das Alte sagt: So wie ich bin, bin ich seit je.

Das Neue sagt: Bist du nicht gut, dann geh. (GW 3: 1261)

This verse from *Das Leben des Galilei* proves a motto for Brecht's approach to writing his plays. Ever concerned with the productive social value of the play, Brecht never hesitates to discard structural methods in favour of more effective ones, as his progression from the conventional drama to the learning plays to the epic *Schaustücke* shows. While critics have long recognized the correlation of content and form in Brecht's plays (Klotz 128; Ley 204), structural differences between the learning plays and the full-scale plays have been interpreted by some scholars as quite profound, reflecting on another level an even more profound difference in the content of the two. Esslin, for example, sees in the learning plays a "puritan" didactic stringency reflective of the doctrinaire influence of Marxism on the playwright which ostensibly gives way in the "mature work" to a revision of his earlier radical position. In exile, Brecht develops his own brand of Marxism that does not detract from his work

as a "true poet" (41, 61, 112, 145). Mittenzwei posits that only after Brecht had familiarized himself with materialist dialectics could he recognize the confines of the learning play "um die vielfältigen und komplizierten Erscheinungen der Gesellschaft wiederzugeben" (126).

This perspective of traditional Brecht criticism is problematic; by focusing upon structural differences between the *Lehrstück* and the *Schaustück*, critics downplay the more fundamental structural consistencies in Brecht's dramatic development as discussed in the previous chapter. Common to all of Brecht's plays are *Verfremdung*, dialectics, and deictic pedagogy resulting in a socialist realistic theatre. These common characteristics indicate not a difference, but a unity of method and a common dramatic purpose throughout Brecht's plays.

This common purpose with his plays accounts for the importance of experimentation for Brecht. As a result of his understanding of the relationship between form and content in the drama, experimentation is fundamental to Brecht's dramatic praxis. Since social engagement is always the driving force behind Brecht's plays, the greatest significance of structure to the play is that it "structures" the socio-political content of the

play. Brecht's pronouncement on the subject is: "Die Form eines Kunstwerks ist nichts als die vollkommene Organisierung seines Inhalts, ihr Wert daher völlig abhängig von diesem" (GW 16: 932). Structural methods are adapted to best express the social message: "Beinahe jede Aufgabe erforderte neue Methoden," such that the only principle Brecht consistently adheres to is "alle Prinzipien unterzuordnen der gesellschaftlichen Aufgabe, die wir mit jedem Werk zu erfüllen uns vorgenommen hatten" (GW 15: 314, 316). Brecht states that all that matters about structural methods is that they socially activate the spectator: "Alle nur denkbaren Kunstmittel, die dazu verhelfen, sollten wir, ob alte oder neue, zu diesem Zweck erproben" (GW 17: 1147; qtd. in *Brecht im Gespräch*, 83). The playwright emphasizes the experimental nature of his plays by referring to them as *Versuche* and, as he underlines in the notes to the *Badener Lehrstück*, the learning plays are as much a process of self-understanding for the authors as for the participants (GW 17: 1028). Accordingly, Brecht's plays do not follow any one given structural pattern.

Given the fundamental consistencies of structural method between the *Lehrstück* and the *Schaustück*, as well as the importance of experimentation for Brecht, it does not follow that formal differences entail a difference in content between the plays. On the contrary, these differences in structure result from Brecht's experimentation with structural methods to express a very similar social message. Comparison of *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* in terms of content reveals that both plays address the problem of the relationship of the individual and society. This common denominator of the *Lehrstücke* and the *Schaustücke* is the constitutive unity of Brecht's work and the basis of his literary Marxism.

Perhaps the most fundamental idea Brecht took up time and again in his plays is that the concept of the "autonomous" individual is a fallacy in modern mass society because people's actions are necessarily informed by society. "Es ist nicht der Mensch, der handelt, sondern das Milieu" (*GW* 15: 331). The individual does not exist by and for himself, but rather through society. The playwright reiterates in his "Marxistische Studien" that people are largely products of their social environment: "Der

Mensch ist nicht vorstellbar ohne menschliche Gesellschaft." As humans are inherently social beings, society has a profound impact on consciousness and behaviour (*GW* 20: 61). Not only are people's thoughts and actions largely influenced by society, but, conversely, the thoughts and actions of the individual affect society as well. Consequently, Brecht shows in his plays that the denial of this reality can have disastrous results for both society and the individual, and thus that the most realistic and productive stance individuals can assume is one that affirms our nature as social beings.

The theme of the individual's dependance upon society is incorporated into the form of *Die Maßnahme* insofar as the Young Comrade is portrayed by the Agitators. Just as his role exists only through the collective portrayal, so too the individual exists only through the collective (Knopf, *Brecht-Handbuch* 98). *Die Maßnahme* further underscores this theme in the scene "Die Auslöschung."

DER LEITER DES PARTEIHAUSES

Dann seid ihr nicht mehr ihr selber, du nicht mehr Karl Schmitt aus Berlin, du nicht mehr Anna Kjersk aus Kasan und du nicht mehr Peter Sawitsch aus Moskau, sondern allesamt ohne Namen und Mutter, leere Blätter, auf welche die Revolution ihre Anweisung schreibt.

DIE ZWEI AGITATOREN

Ja.

DER LEITER DES PARTEIHAUSES *gibt ihnen Masken, sie setzen sie auf*  
(KA 41).

Here, the Agitators and the Young Comrade are disguised as Chinese in preparation for their propaganda mission in China. At the same time, however, the scene also symbolizes a social refunctioning of the Agitators as individuals (GW 17: 1031). Precisely because of this symbolism, "Die Auslöschung" became the most infamous scene of *Die Maßnahme*, as many scholars found it to be the negation of individual personality altogether (Schumacher, *Die dramatischen Versuche* 320; Esslin 206; Kaiser 114). Yet the "Auslöschung" does not symbolize the relinquishment of individuality, but rather the recognition of our social nature and so the acquisition of a new, realistic individuality (Knopf, *Brecht-Handbuch* 421). Through understanding that the individual is but one of many within society, the individual freedom of all is enhanced as each individual comes to realize that our rights may not infringe upon those of others. What is liquidated is not the individual persona, but the idealistic concept of the autonomous individual. The laying on of the masks represents an addition to the faces underneath; the Agitators gain a new understanding of their own individuality as a part of the collective.

The "Auslöschung" is of particular significance to *Die Maßnahme* because it underscores the underlying message of the play: that only through *Einverständnis* or by working together can the world be changed for the better.<sup>1</sup> In the sixth scene, the Young Comrade is so moved by the misery he sees that he breaks with the group's undertaking and attempts to start revolutionary action on his own. In the following passages, the Agitators try to show him the futility of his action.

DIE DREI AGITATOREN

Sieh nicht nur mit deinen Augen!

Der Einzelne hat zwei Augen

Die Partei hat tausend Augen.

Die Partei sieht sieben Staaten

Der Einzelne sieht eine Stadt.

Der Einzelne hat seine Stunde

Aber die Partei hat viele Stunden.

Der Einzelne kann vernichtet werden

Aber die Partei kann nicht vernichtet werden.

Denn sie beruht auf der Lehre der Klassiker

Welche geschöpft ist aus der Kenntnis der Wirklichkeit

und bestimmt ist, sie zu verändern, indem sie, die Lehre

Die Massen ergreift. (KA 57)

...

DIE DREI AGITATOREN

... Sieh doch die Wirklichkeit!

Deine Revolution ist schnell gemacht und dauert einen Tag

Und ist morgen abgewürgt.

Aber unsere Revolution beginnt morgen

Siegt und verändert die Welt.

Deine Revolution hört auf, wenn du aufhörst.

Wenn du aufgehört hast

<sup>1</sup> See Knopf, *Brecht-Handbuch* 101.



Geht unsere Revolution weiter. (KA 58)

The Agitators attempt in vain to show the Young Comrade that he does not see the situation clearly. Because the Party (representative of the collective) consists of many individuals, logically it should have greater vision than one individual and also has the strength in numbers which is necessary to influence society positively. This is the *Lehre* upon which the Party is based--specifically, an understanding of the reality that only through the masses can the present social order be changed. The Young Comrade's inability to grasp this reality of the new collective role of the individual severely jeopardizes the success of the propaganda mission and the lives of the Agitators. Believing that he can make a difference independently of the collective, unable to see beyond his immediate, uncritical instinct to help those in need, the Young Comrade insists upon pursuing his own well-intended, albeit misplaced action until he forces himself into a position in which his death becomes necessary. Thus the case of the Young Comrade demonstrates not only the illusory nature of the "autonomous individual" in modern mass society, but also the

destructive repercussions lack of understanding for the individual's role in society may have.

*Das Leben des Galilei* also deals with the problem of the individual and society, if from a somewhat different angle than *Die Maßnahme*.

While the learning play focused upon the new collective role of the individual, the scope of *Galilei* widens to address the larger issue of the responsibility of the individual to society. As a representative of the new scientific method, Galilei demonstrates that the individual may be a highly positive, vital force within society. One of the most developed of Brecht's characters, Galilei embodies a sensuality and vitality which Brecht connects with the fundamental, materialist impetus of science. His passion for science and learning is as strong as his interest in the pleasures of life, such that Barberini says of Galilei: "Er denkt aus Sinnlichkeit. Zu einem alten Wein oder einem neuen Gedanken könnte er nicht nein sagen" (*GW* 3: 1324). Galilei's thirst for scientific knowledge reflects on another level a collective need for science, not only for its creative power to improve the quality of human life, but also because people want to understand the way the world works. Thus both the rising

bourgeoisie (represented by Vanni) and the new breed of scientists (Andrea, Federzoni) share Galilei's curiosity and interest in science. Galilei responds to the people's need for reason and scientific method; repeatedly he asserts his belief in the power of reason: "Ja, ich glaube an die sanfte Gewalt der Vernunft über die Menschen. Sie können ihr auf die Dauer nicht widerstehen. . . . Das Denken gehört zu den größten Vergnügungen der menschlichen Rasse" (*GW* 3: 1256).

Not only does Galilei recognize that his science could show people the mechanics of the universe, but, more importantly, he recognizes the implication that this scientific view of the universe holds for existing social structures. Science constitutes a potentially enormous liberating force, because the fundamental skepticism of the scientific method can be applied equally well to social as well as natural phenomena. Galilei's astronomical findings would have a revolutionary effect if they reached the marketplace. "Es sind nicht die Bewegungen einiger entfernter Gestirne, die Italien aufhorchen machen, sondern die Kunde, daß für unerschütterlich angesehene Lehren ins Wanken gekommen sind und jedermann weiß, daß es deren zu viele gibt" (*GW* 3: 1270). Galilei sees

that the Church's unwillingness to recognize the Copernican theory has nothing to do with the Ptolemaic system. Instead, it results from the Church's (representative of the so-called Establishment) fear that the new understanding of the world will disrupt the "God-given" social order (*GW* 3: 1295-6). "Das Weltall hat über Nacht seinen Mittelpunkt verloren und am Morgen hatte es deren unzählige. So daß jetzt jeder als Mittelpunkt angesehen wird und keiner" (*GW* 3: 1234). The revelation that the earth is not the centre of the universe, but only one of many heavenly bodies, suggests that society has no centre, rather, it is comprised of many equal individuals.

At the same time, however, the case of Galilei illustrates the dialectical nature of this science and the dialectical role of the individual in society. In the hands of one individual alone, the productive, constructive power of science can prove equally destructive for society. While the individual represents a rejuvenating, creative force within the collective, this impulse can also become selfish and corrupt, and so affect society in a very negative way. Similarly, Brecht tries to show Galilei's sensuality, the positive, physical pole to his intellect, as ambivalent. The

scientist admits his own human weakness: "Ich schätze meine Bequemlichkeit" (*GW* 3: 1318), ultimately becoming a slave to his passion for science: "Oh, ich bin ein Sklave meiner Gewohnheiten" (*GW* 3: 1336). In his last appearance in the play, the scientist indicates that he has continued his research by mentioning he has "relapses," as if to say that science has become an addiction for him (*GW* 3: 1336).

As a result of his egotism, Galilei succumbs to the Church's pressure to recant the heliocentric theory. "Und ich überliefert mein Wissen den Machthabern, es zu gebrauchen, es nicht zu gebrauchen, es zu mißbrauchen, ganz, wie es ihren Zwecken diene" (*GW* 3: 1341). By delivering his knowledge into the hands of the Church to do with as it saw fit, Galilei thus ensured the continuation of the repressive feudal conditions of his society. His real crime is that he failed to act at a historical juncture when he knew that his scientific findings could have made a difference in society. Ironically he becomes the hypocrite he had once accused the scholar Mucius of being: "Wer die Wahrheit nicht weiß, der ist bloß ein Dummkopf. Aber wer sie weiß und sie eine Lüge nennt,

der ist ein Verbrecher!" (GW 3: 1300). Thus Galilei condemns his own recantation as criminal before it even occurs.

*Das Leben des Galilei* demonstrates that individuals are not free to act solely in their own interest, but are accountable to the greater collective of which they are part. In the end, Galilei recognizes the repercussions that his cowardice had upon society and thus comes to understand the responsibility of the scientist to society for his research. When the grown-up Andrea visits Galilei in later years, he tries to rationalize Galilei's recantation, as it enabled the older scientist to complete the *Discorsi*. Galilei, however, avers that he is but one equal with other individuals in society and affirms that the scientist's responsibility to society is more important than any scientific contribution:

ANDREA Sie gewannen die Muße, ein wissenschaftliches Werk zu schreiben, das nur sie schreiben konnten. Hätten Sie in einer Gloriole von Feuer auf dem Scheiterhaufen geendet, wären die andern die Sieger gewesen.

GALILEI Sie sind die Sieger. Und es gibt kein wissenschaftliches Werk, das nur ein Mann schreiben kann (GW 3: 1338).

Galilei himself comes to realize the ambivalent nature of science; used for the wrong reasons, it becomes not productive, but eminently destructive for human existence, which science and technology should

ostensibly improve. For this reason, scientists must accept social responsibility for their research, and more generally, individuals are accountable to society for their actions.

#### GALILEI

Aber können wir uns der Menge verweigern und doch Wissenschaftler bleiben? . . . Wofür arbeitet ihr? Ich halte dafür, daß das einzige Ziel der Wissenschaft darin besteht, die Mühseligkeit der menschlichen Existenz zu erleichtern. Wenn Wissenschaftler, eingeschüchtert durch selbstsüchtige Machthaber, sich damit begnügen, Wissen um des Wissens willen anzuhäufen, kann die Wissenschaft zum Knüppel gemacht werden, und eure neuen Maschinene mögen nur neue Drangsale bedeuten. Ihr mögt mit der Zeit alles entdecken, was es zu entdecken gibt, und euer Fortschritt wird doch nur ein Fortschreiten von der Menschheit weg sein. Die Kluft zwischen euch und ihr kann eines Tages so groß werden, daß euer Jubelschrei über irgendeine neue Errungenschaft von einem universalen Entsetzensschrei beantwortet werden könnte (*GW* 3: 1340-1).

The universal scream of horror refers to the world's reaction to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Using the story of Galileo, Brecht treats the problematic of a socially irresponsible tradition of science that recognizes only the contribution to science and ignores the inevitable social repercussions of research. This would eventually lead to the creation of nuclear technology that could potentially destroy humanity (Schumacher, *Drama und Geschichte* 858). In this way, *Galilei* illustrates how dangerous the illusion of the autonomous individual and how vital

an understanding of the individual as a responsible member of society has become in the nuclear era.

This similarity of social message between *Die Maßnahme* and *Das Leben des Galilei* indicates that the *Lehrstücke* and *Schaustücke* are in fact, closely related. Differences between the two arise primarily from the methods Brecht uses to express the most basic insights of historical materialism: that man is inherently social and that society is necessarily historical and man-made. Like Marx, Brecht concludes that people do not understand the social mechanisms that determine their lives, and consequently are powerless to change them: "Er [der Mensch] weiß nicht, wovon er abhängt, er kennt nicht den Griff in die soziale Maschinerie, der nötig ist . . ." (*GW* 15: 295). Brecht fashioned his *neue Dramatik* to show: "daß des Menschen Schicksal der Mensch ist" (*GW* 9: 761). If people could understand their role in the complexities and contradictions of social structures, the first step toward changing them for the better would have been made (*GW* 16: 529-30).

Der einzelne Typus und seine Handlungsweise wird so bloßgelegt, daß die sozialen Motoren sichtbar werden, denn nur ihre Beherrschung liefert ihn dem Zugriff aus. Das Individuum bleibt Individuum, wird aber ein gesellschaftliches Phänomen, seine Leidenschaften etwa werden



gesellschaftliche Angelegenheiten und auch seine Schicksale (*GW* 16: 654).

Thus Brecht's *neue Dramatik* fosters a consciousness that through understanding of their innate social nature and working together in community, people have the potential to free themselves from repressive forces within society. This revelation and empowerment of people as productive and responsible human beings is the central driving force of Brecht's drama.

So while it may be true of some Communist writers after the *Wende*, that their work no longer holds the same legitimacy it once had, this is definitely not true of Brecht. The message of the plays illustrates that Brecht's literary Marxism is not limited to partisan politics. The significance of Marx for Brecht is the socially liberating force of his theory, which was one of the fundamental sources of European Modernism. As such, it provided a valuable understanding of the workings of capitalism, and gave rise to increased awareness of social rights and freedoms for all members of society. Moreover, Marx provides Brecht with the theoretical foundation for the playwright's marxist-humanist work. In 1929 Brecht begins his study of Marx, drawing upon

many other Marxist theorists as well: Lenin, Luxemburg, Korsch, Mao, in addition to the sociologist Fritz Sternberg. Likely as a result of these diverse influences, Brecht was able to surpass Marxist philosophy, using its premises as the *Stoff* of his own humanist vision. Based upon a collective humanism, Brecht's work recognizes the intrinsic value and dignity of every human being. Indeed, Marx provided the impetus for this intense social humanism in Brecht's art. Nonetheless, because it is unfettered by Party dogma, Brecht's dramatic work may well outlast the theoretical corpus of Marxist thought. The validity and applicability of Brecht's art, after the *Wende* as always, lie in its productivity for the social and cultural progress of the human community: "Alle Künste tragen bei zur größten aller Künste, der Lebenskunst" (*GW* 16: 702).

## Works Cited

### Primary Sources

- Brecht, Bertolt. *Arbeitsjournal*. Ed. Werner Hecht. 2 vols. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973.
- . *Gesammelte Werke*. 20 vols. Werkausgabe. Edition Suhrkamp. 2. Ed. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968.
- . *Die Maßnahme. Kritische Ausgabe*. Ed. Reiner Steinweg. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972.
- . *Werke*. Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe. Eds. Werner Hecht, Jan Knopf, Werner Mittenzwei and Klaus-Detlev Müller. 30 vols. Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988-.

### Secondary Sources

- Arendt, Hannah. *Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht*. Serie Piper 12. München: Piper, 1971.
- Cohen, M.A. "History and Moral in Brechts *The Life of Galileo*." *Contemporary Literature* 11 (1970): 80-97. Rpt. in Mews 115-28.
- Esslin, Martin. *Brecht: A Choice of Evils*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1959.

- Fischer, Matthias-Johannes. *Brechts Theatertheorie. Forschungsgeschichte--Forschungsstand--Perspektiven*. Europäische Hochschulschriften: Series 1. Deutsche Sprache und Literatur 1115. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989.
- Fischer, Ruth. *Stalin and German Communism. A Study in the Origins of the State Party*. Cambridge: Harvard University P, 1948.
- Grimm, Reinhold. "Ideologische Tragödie und Tragödie der Ideologie. Versuch über ein Lehrstück." *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 78 (1959): 394-424.
- Hecht, Werner. *Brecht im Gespräch. Diskussionen, Dialoge, Interviews*. Edition Suhrkamp 771. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975.
- . *Brechts Weg zum epischen Theater. Beitrag zur Entwicklung des epischen Theaters: 1919-1933*. Berlin: Henschel, 1962.
- , ed. *Materialien zu Brechts Leben des Galilei*. Edition Suhrkamp 44. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963.
- International Brecht Society. "The Other Brecht." Call for Papers for the 8th Symposium of the International Brecht Society, Augsburg, Germany, December 8-13, 1991.
- Kaiser, Joachim. "Brechts Maßnahme und die linke Angst. Warum ein Lehrstück so viel Verlegenheit und Verlogenheit provozierte." *Neue Rundschau* 84 (1973): 96-127.
- Karasek, Hellmuth. "Brecht ist tot." *Der Spiegel* 32. 27. Feb. 1978. 216-7.
- Klotz, Volker. *Bertolt Brecht. Versuch über das Werk*. Bad Homburg: Hermann Genter, 1961.

Knopf, Jan. *Brecht-Handbuch: Theater*. 1980 Sonderausgabe. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1986.

---. *Bertolt Brecht. Ein kritischer Forschungsbericht. Fragwürdiges in der Brecht-Forschung*. Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1974.

Lazarowicz, Klaus. "Die rote Messe: Liturgische Elemente in Brechts *Maßnahme*." *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 16 (1975): 205-20.

Ley, Ralph. *Brecht as Thinker. Studies in Literary Marxism and Existentialism*. Illinois Language and Culture Series no. 6. Ann Arbor: Monograph, 1979.

Mennemaier, Franz Norbert. *Modernes Deutsches Drama: Kritiken und Charakteristiken*. Vol. 1. Uni-taschenbücher 135. München: Wilhelm Fink, 1973.

Metscher, T.W.H. "Brecht and Marxist Dialectics." *Oxford German Studies* 6 (1972): 132-44.

Mews, Siegfried, ed. *Critical Essays on Bertolt Brecht*. Critical Essays on World Literature. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1989.

Mittenzwei, Werner. *Bertolt Brecht: Von der Maßnahme zu Leben Galilei*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1965.

Müller, Klaus-Detlev et. al. *Bertolt Brecht: Epoche--Werk--Wirkung*. München: C.H. Beck, 1985.

Rohrmoser, Günther. "Das Leben des Galilei." *Das deutsche Drama: Vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart*. Ed. Benno von Wiese. Vol. 2. Düsseldorf: August Bagel, 1960. 2 vols. 401-14.

- Rosenbauer, Hansjürgen. *Brecht und der Behaviorismus*. Vol. 1. New York University Ottendorfer Series. Bad Homburg V.D.H., Berlin and Zürich: Dr. Max Gehlen, 1970.
- Rülicke, Käthe. "Bemerkungen zur Schlußszene," Hecht, *Materialien* 91-152.
- Schumacher, Ernst. *Drama und Geschichte. Bertolt Brechts Leben des Galilei und andere Stücke*. Berlin: Henschel, 1965.
- . *Die dramatischen Versuche Bertolt Brechts 1918-1933*. 1954. Berlin: Das europäische Buch, 1977.
- . "Form und Einfühlung." Hecht, *Materialien* 153-70.
- Steinweg, Reiner, ed. *Brechts Modell der Lehrstücke: Zeugnisse, Diskussion, Erfahrungen*. Edition Suhrkamp 751. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976.
- . *Das Lehrstück: Brechts Theorie einer politisch-ästhetischen Erziehung*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1972.
- . "Die Maßnahme--Übungstext, nicht Tragödie." *Alternative* 78/79 (1971): 133-43.
- Subiotto, Arrigo. "Epic Theatre: A Theatre for the Scientific Age." *Brecht in Perspective*. Eds. Graham Bartram und Anthony White. London und New York: Longman, 1982. 30-44. Rpt. in Mews 197-208.
- Voigts, Manfred. *Brechts Theaterkonzeptionen. Entstehung und Entfaltung bis 1931*. München: n.p., 1977.