

## Abstract

Over a span of seventeen years, from 1938 to 1955, Bertolt Brecht used the life of the historical figure, Galileo Galilei, as the background to create the three versions of the Galileo play. Part One of this thesis attempts to explore the three versions and their changes, and how new insights into Brecht's life as a politically orientated dramatist have been gained under each different authority, which turn the plays towards new directions.

Part One, Chapter One introduces the biographical backgrounds of Galileo Galilei and Bertolt Brecht. Brecht's dramatic theory, which includes the theory of epic theater, alienation and his strong Marxist's influence, will be explored.

Chapter Two addresses the first version of Galileo written in 1938, during Brecht's exile in Denmark. Galileo is presented as a hero of society, the modern Prometheus who had an ability to turn night as bright as day, for the people. The recantation by Galileo in this version was seen by Brecht as a clever move to outsmart the authorities.

Chapter Three regards the American version of the play. It was written in the USA in 1945, in collaboration with the English actor Charles Laughton. The focus of the play turns to the scientist's roles in and responsibilities to society. It is widely known that when writing the American version, Brecht was greatly influenced by the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The "new" Galileo's role as a scientist was to ensure that his research was conducted for the sake of humanity, instead of research just for the sake of research.

Chapter Four introduces the third version of Galileo, which was written in 1955 in Berlin. The last and final version of the play deals with Galileo's class betrayal. In the Berlin version, Galileo is no longer presented as the hero, but as the villain.

Galileo recants his teachings out of cowardice, not to outwit the authorities that he can continue with his research in secrecy. Galileo's crime lies in discovering the truth but keeping it from the people, which is regarded as a betrayal of his own class.

Chapter Five concludes this thesis, and shows how Brecht's changes in life have led to the drastic change of directions in the Galileo plays, and how Brecht's relations with different authorities have led to transformations in the play.

Part Two contains a complete English translation of the Danish version. Since only a German copy was found, it is necessary to provide the reader with an English copy to enable better understanding of this thesis.

