The Baroque According to Brecht: Speculations on the Status of Literature and Theory at the End of the Millenium

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ABSTRACT

This essay re-examines the persistent and perplexing question regarding the relationship between "literature" and "theory" at the end of the millennium as a result of the current looming uncertainty concerning the terms' ever-shifting meanings. My intention then is to speculate on this uncertainty, by contrasting our situation with that of Brecht in his study of the Baroque world of Galileo and Shakespeare. Brecht's work on these two authors is evidence of his own sense that the roots of modernity could be found and studied in the figure of Galileo, and the characterizations of Shakespeare. While many at the school for theory in the humanities (and elsewhere), might be concerned about the demise of literature at the end of the millennium, there is still equally a worry about where our modern sense of it all began and how it can possibly proceed. These concerns are at the base of Brecht's glance back. The works resulting from his backwards glance, in particular to Galileo, reveal his own sense that we, like Galileo, can create catastrophic new worlds if we fail to speculate and act carefully. My focus, in this article, is Brecht's *Short Organum for the Theater*, a theoretical work and *The Life of Galileo*, a play, both of which resulted from his study of the two Renaissance-Baroque authors. In this regard, Brecht's work is both instructive and informative, and helps us to unravel the complex question regarding the relationship between literature, theory, and the humanities as we begin a new millennium.

KEY WORDS

high anagnoresis
low anagnoresis
Aristotelian tragedy
catharsis
aesthetic
epic theater
literay representation
modern subjectivity
peripety
reversal

In the inaugural session of the International School of Theory in/for Humanities, one of the questions inevitably asked was, "what constitutes 'Theory' and what is Literature's relation to Theory?" Raising this question in a public forum invited the utterance of many well-intentioned answers, since each of us no doubt desired to reassure ourselves about our own perspectives on such a pressing question. Nonetheless, uncertainty concerning the current meaning and place of both Literature and Theory loomed large, as it has for some time. In this article, I want to speculate on this uncertainty, by contrasting our situation to that of Brecht in his study of the Baroque world of Galileo and Shakespeare. Brecht's work on these authors is evidence of his own sense that the roots of Modernity could be found and studied in the figure of Galileo, and the characterizations of Shakespeare.

While many at the School for Theory in the Humanities (and elsewhere), might be concerned about the demise of Literature at the end of the millenium, there is still equally a worry about where our Modern sense of it all began and how it can possibly proceed. These concerns are at the base of Brecht's glance back. The works resulting from his backwards glance, in particular to Galileo, reveal his own sense that we, like Galileo, can create catastrophic new worlds if we fail to speculate and act carefully.

Brecht's study of these Renaissance-Baroque authors produced both theoretical works, notably his *Short Organum for the Theater*, and literary works, such as his late play, *The Life of Galileo*. The latter was an obsessive project which generated a massive quantity of theoretical commentary on Brecht's part, and three versions of the play.[1] In both the *Organum* and *Galileo*, there is a recognition that

certain dramaturgic theories were necessarily implied in the works of the Renaissance-Baroque authors mentioned above, and that new dramatic theories were called for in Brecht's age. According to Brecht, the lesson still insufficiently clear for his own new age was that the Baroque theory of drama could indeed become a seminal theory for the drama of a new age, his own age. What was *anticipated* in the Baroque period was the theoretical perspective triggering Brecht's process in constructing a new form of dramatic theory, which further implies Brecht's insistence that the new age began with Galileo's recantation and with Shakespeare's manipulation of dramatic characterization.

The change orchestrated by Brecht, with which I am most concerned, is the need for a renunciation of *anagnoresis* (recognition) coupled with reversal (*peripety*), in the name of a weaker form, that of recognition as a form of realizing one's continuing limits, and one's failure to renounce private desires. In each of these cases, a confession of weakness can occur. I will distinguish these two forms of *anagnoresis* as high *anagnoresis* (accompanied by *peripety*) and low *anagnoresis* or confession (a failure to renounce private desire). In Galileo's case, his recantation is a form of recognizing limits.

Sections 11 and 16 of Aristotle's *Poetics* are the ones which deal directly with *anagnoresis*. In Section 11, Aristotle will already specify that *anagnoresis* represents a change from ignorance to knowledge, and will also specify that *anagnoresis* coupled with *peripety* (reversal) is the highest form of *anagnoresis*.This is because the act of perception involved in *anagnoresis* can become inseparably tied with the actions of the protagonist directly related to his move towards his Fate. It is the act of perception which will command our attention in considering Brecht's project, as he seeks to undermine the privileging of high *anagnoresis*.

But, Brecht's project of orchestrating changes through his use of *anagnoresis* is not undertaken in order to embrace these weak forms of recognition, but to make them the center of characterization in the drama, in order to bring attention to them, and to consider what future alternative worlds might emerge on the basis of this new dramatic

form. Brecht's attempt to realize this project helped him to locate the place that Literature could have in the new world of the early to mid-twentieth century.[2] Given his perspective, it seems appropriate to face the conditions of Theory and Literature at the end of the millenium by considering the ways in which Brecht both came to terms with the decay of Literature's value in his own time and succeeded in cementing a specific relationship between Literature and Theory. Again, his insistence on the absolute modernity of the Baroque world contributed to this process. In essence, his theater and his theory form a continuity as opposed to a point of comparison with the world he saw inaugurated in the Baroque world of Galileo and Shakespeare.[3]

From a theoretical point of view, our concentration must be on Brecht's desire to construct a theater for the Scientific age, and his use of the figure of Galileo in order to do so. From a literary point of view, our focus must be on the *act* of confessing or low *anagnoresis*. Galileo's moment of confession or recantation in the *Galileo* play invited and still invites the most ambiguity concerning Brecht's intentions in this piece. It is the action in the play which forced Brecht to keep rewriting the play.

While Galileo's act appears as the inverse of confession, i.e., he conceals his beliefs about the truth-value of his science, it ultimately serves as a confession of his limitations in the face of physical torture. His act changes the world. "To confess" implies that one has gone to the limits of one's capacity to dissemble and that one can no longer withhold the truth. No matter whether that truth is delusional or not, the one who confesses believes it is true, and their revelation changes their world. So, Galileo's recantational "confession" changes the status of Science, as we shall see, but does Galileo's recantation constitute a tragedy? This is the interpretive question on which an analysis of the Galileo character has often rested, and which any discussion of *anagnoresis* must address.[4]

In order to redirect the stakes of this question, from a straightforward generic question (an obsolete question to those who believe that Literature is in a state of demise), to a pressing question about future worlds, we have to insist on the centrality of the act of confes-

sion or recantation. The aforementioned changes in the confessor's world imply that the act of confession is a threshold to the building of a new world. The act takes place in a present moment, it provides a specific rendering of a historical past and it embodies a plan for an alternative world. Brecht's literary creation, in the form of Galileo's recantation and confession, displays a kernel of his theoretical attempts to build a theatrical aesthetic for a new age, a scientific age.

Again, my concern here is with the dramatic representation of confession as a weaker form or negation of the highest form of *anagnoresis* in the Aristotelian sense. A literary representation such as the one described alters tragic theory in a fundamental way. But it is not until Brecht's attempts to construct a theater for the Scientific Age that it receives its proper theoretical formulation, despite the fact that one can find multiple examples of such literary practice in the seventeenth century.[5] Tragedy dies in the Baroque age but the theoretical necessity *as a grounds for a new theatrical aesthetic* is not fully articulated until 300 years later. Transformations in the use or representation of *anagnoresis* provide for a microscopic view of this grounding process.

Examples of literary representations of low *anagnoresis*, mentioned above, can be found in some of the characters created by Shakespeare. In what way might they be shown to reveal or anticipate the type of characterization with which Brecht is concerned in his shaping of the Galileo figure? In order to construct a speculative link between that which Shakespearean characterization anticipates and that which Brecht's new dramatic theory wants to inaugurate, I want to look at how confessional acts in Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Hamlet* mimic but fail to attain the status of the highest form of *anagnoresis*, thus serving as possible models for Brecht in his formulation of theory for a new theatrical aesthetic.

Brecht's representation of Galileo is a characterization based on a lesson learned from Shakespeare about the ignobility of the world, where the heroic form of *anagnoresis* must inevitably be replaced. The Galileo character in Brecht's play suggests that the dawn of the new age in which he is living, and which serves as a backdrop for the

Galileo play, is a blood-spattered whore.[6] Acknowledgement of and responsibility for *hubris* are replaced by admissions of ignoble desires in Shakespeare's characterization and, as Brecht will insist, in Galileo's recantation. Where Shakespeare's works make use of such confessions of ignobility, they anticipate the demise of the tragedy. Brecht's depiction of Galileo reaffirms that demise and turns it into a theoretical or aesthetic principle.

Furthermore, Brecht is able, unlike Shakespeare, to construct a theoretical base for coping with a world where high *anagnoresis* can have no value. In his *Short Organum for the Theater*, his treatises on the value of truth and other theoretical writings, Brecht has shaped his plans for working out Literature's place in this new world largely on the basis of what he learned from Shakespeare while he was constructing the recantation of Galileo in his play, *Life of Galileo*.[7] The influence that Shakespeare's characterization had on Brecht is treated primarily in Brecht's writings on his production of Coriolanus.[8] Nonetheless, one reason to focus on the *American* version of the Galileo play in considering Brecht's study of Shakespeare, is that Shakespeare entered into the *Galileo* play largely through the participation of Charles Laughton.

In the writing and rehearsing of the American version, for example, Laughton performed readings of Shakespeare on numerous occasions, as a way of finding the real meaning behind a particular scene, in order to put that meaning into American dialogue. While it's clear from production and journal notes that Shakespeare was a crucial intermediary for Laughton and Brecht in terms of language and their ability to communicate, one can no doubt wonder if there is really a point of comparison in Shakespeare's treatment of *anagnoresis* and Brecht's. I would like to posit that such a similarity can be found and that it is important to posit it in order to understand Brecht's aesthetic theory, as well as his valuable recognition of the modernity of the Baroque text.[9] His subsequent studies of *Coriolanus* indicate a desire to profit from a study of Shakespeare in order to construct characters for an age in which heroes should not be needed.

According to Aristotle's *Poetics*, *anagnoresis* can be a recogni-

tion of error, and in the case of recognition combined with reversal, it usually is. Additionally, it is usually experienced by the tragic protagonist. The recognition, and the subsequent assumption of responsibility on the part of the protagonist, for the dire consequences of his acts, should result in *catharsis,* though the *catharsis* belongs to the spectator. The recognition inherent to the tragic representation is reiterated by the spectator, and his/her capacity to act in relation to this recognition is curtailed. The spectator or reader is saved from future dire consequences by the *heroic* capacity of the protagonist to experience recognition. The protagonist's added ability to take responsibility for his or her error is further assurance that crisis has been averted. Even if there has been a moment of suffering and cruelty, the promise of the tragedy is that suffering and cruelty can be contained. Thus, the structural elements of the tragedy have the capacity to become pedagogic in their very inception. Mutations in the tragic form which come about through evolving Literary representations determine what can be taught and what potential new truths about the world can emerge.

Like *anagnoresis*, a confession can also be a recognition of error, but there is no accompanying certainty of restored unity. As Brecht shows, in depicting Galileo's recantation, his confession is a renouncement of work that he believes to have been true in the name of creature comforts. As such, it brings an end to Galileo's public research into new scientific truths and, thus, to his heroic status. Additionally, it compromises the possibilities for a new world by insuring that science must be answerable to political authority.[10]

Brecht's characterization of the man Galileo invited criticism from those not willing to consider the particulars of Brecht's theories concerning a theater for the new age, a scientific age. Brecht himself will insist that his Galileo, like the historical Galileo (according to Brecht), is neither tragic nor heroic, he is human.[11] Brecht will equally insist that this does not excuse him. Therefore, one can easily assume that Brecht's desire to cast Galileo in a critical light was due primarily to a need to comment on the political climate of his times. And indeed, the prologue to the American version of the play ends

with a warning to viewers that "if you won't learn from Galileo's experience, the bomb will put in a personal appearance."[12]

But one must not neglect to consider that Brecht's dramatic form and theory of the epic theater are not intended as reactionary critiques of present catastrophe, but rather, as pedagogic devices for a realistic move into a new world. The shift of emphasis I want to draw attention to is that Brecht's Galileo character is a carefully composed lesson about what happened in the Baroque age when Galileo recanted. Brecht's claim is that Galileo's very real, very historical recantation led to the moment of truth facing mid-century Europe and America, as opposed to suggesting either that Galileo or that the two periods can be conveniently *compared*. There is no comparison, only continuity. But again, Brecht cements the relation between the two periods through the dramatic representation of low *anagnoresis*. And insofar as the performance of confession has a place of importance in the building of his theory, it has it by virtue of its ultimate purpose, the revelation of a previously concealed truth at the expense of the reputation or future stakes of the individual who confesses. Thus, Brecht's lesson is about the advisedness of considering Galileo as a hero.

It doesn't matter if Brecht's truth-speaking about Galileo is only a well-intentioned (but less than perfect) answer to what a study of the Baroque could possibly mean to his own age; he has already granted himself immunity for the telling of well-intentioned lies in his theoretical piece, *Writing the Truth: Five Difficulties*.[13] In this article, Brecht implies that distinguishing the purposes of Literary as opposed to Theoretical texts is a fruitless exercise, because all that matters is telling the truth and that to do so requires that one be capable of manipulating literary forms and structures with cunning and skill, in order to reveal theoretical stances, which he refers to as truths.

What truth does Brecht hope to reveal in his characterization of Galileo, and is this truth anticipated in such characters as Desdemona and Claudius? On the surface, the sole point of comparison between the three characterizations is their explicit moves towards humanizing: Claudius the King, Desdemona the genteel lady and Galileo the sci-

entist all undergo this process. Thus, we must ask what purpose can the humanizing of Galileo possibly serve and why must it be Galileo as opposed to Einstein or Oppenheimer, for example? In order to answer this, we must return to the nature of confession in Shakespeare. And what we can note is that there is often a parasitic relation between the confessions of secondary characters, such as Desdemona and Claudius, and the confessions of the major protagonists, for whom the secondary characters serve as foils.

In Othello, Act 1, Scene 3, line 243, Desdemona appeals to the Duke to give her a "charter." She asks that the Duke allow her to start on a journey to her own new self, through the agency of the Other, i.e., Othello.[14] Othello, or a newly confessed desire, will become Desdemona's charter and her request will be granted or denied, based on the Duke's judgement of her capacity to control discourse in a way that will perpetuate his State and her own desire. Desdemona justifies her secret marriage to Othello by constructing a discourse wherein her narrative of herself is only complete because she has seen Othello's "visage in his mind" (1.3.249), and can guarantee its contents to the Duke. She recognizes Othello in a particular way and a mutated form of *anagnoresis* is put into place as she confesses her desire for Othello to the Duke. She claims that her perspective will give power to the Duke because her desire will allow her to enter into the private parts of the Other, Othello, who has been conscripted to the service of the Duke's state.

While she freely confesses her desire, she also argues its consonance with the alternative world of a Duke's empire expanded, thanks to this new alliance of the Duke, Othello and Desdemona. Because she has seen Othello as he has seen himself, and is also willing to legitimate that secret glimpse of the Other through the powerful discourse of the State, she indirectly assures the Duke that she could be a valuable agent in the course of Othello's voyage to extend the Duke's world. Her confession gives her charter a legitimacy for building an alternative world, but it does not assure the feasibility or truth or ethical dimensions of that new world. There is some uncertainty about whether or not Desdemona's confessed desire can be grounds for a

new heroic age. This is a crucial uncertainty with respect to the demise of the Aristotelian tragedy, because an ignoble element is being willingly introduced at the same time as it is being diagnosed as benign.

The uncertainty is amplified by the bifold construction of Desdemona's confession. On the one hand, she appeals to the legal obligation she has to be dutiful to Othello, now that she is married to him. "But here's my husband; And so much duty as my mother showed to you, preferring you before her father, So much I challenge that I may profess Due to the Moor, my lord" (1.3.183-187). Her words are spoken to her father, but they are directed to the Duke. Again, she intimates, through referring to Othello as the Moor, that she is the means by which the Duke can truly domesticate this valuable foreign resource.

On the other hand, there is still a question about whether or not the marriage can be upheld, but Desdemona shortcircuits any attacks against it by appealing in advance to the protection provided by the marriage *vow*. Her vow, delivered in secret, becomes legitimated in a public sphere. Secrets become part of public history, and of public knowledge. The Duke confirms this when he speaks of her deed as regrettable, but irreversible.

The public nature of the vow is closely linked with the public nature of the confession. Desdemona's appeal for a charter, which is made after the Duke has upheld the legitimacy of the marriage vow, was specifically for a charter that she could find in the Duke's *voice* (1.3.243) "to assist her simpleness." It is at this moment that she requires the Duke to allow her to take the physical journey on which Othello is about to embark. Ten lines later, Othello will also entreat the Duke to give Desdemona his voice. The Duke here protects himself by giving them the right to make a private decision. Her private desire thereby has a place in his world, but *as private*. The groundwork is laid for a rift between her desire and the Duke's unified State. His unified State still belongs to the world of Aristotelian tragedy, and a failure to uphold that State would be Othello's tragedy.

Desdemona's charter is her implicit suggestion that she can

guarantee the successful coexistence of private desire and a unified State. In this guarantee lies her capacity to be considered in heroic proportions. The passages following the trial of Othello concern Desdemona's sea voyage, on board with Iago, where the dialogue centers on praise, notably *written* praise. This is but one test of Desdemona's ability to dissemble and to withhold secrets. It does not reveal her failure to fulfill her charter. Her failure will finally be revealed in a later contrast between herself and Iago's wife, Emilia. Emilia describes the means by which to control discourse in a world based on infinite desire and Desdemona rejects this description. Emilia claims that she would indeed cuckold her husband if by so doing she could gain the world (4.3.57-82). Her argument is that if she owned the world, she could make her husband supreme ruler and declare herself innocent of any wrongdoing in the cuckolding. "Why the wrong is but a wrong in the world; and having the world for your labor, tis a wrong in your own world, and you might quickly make it right". Emilia's suggestion is that individual desire must be infinite, if it is to succeed.

It is not that Desdemona is incapable of usurping power, but that she is incapable of allowing the pure advancement of State power to compromise her desire for her husband. This betrays the potential for a dissolution of her alliance with the Duke, should the advancement of his State ever compromise her desire for her husband. While her protestations are here seemingly based on a sense of moral duty, earlier passages suggest that her sense of moral duty is grounded on her desire. For example, as I have mentioned above, her marriage is there simply to legitimate desire. Ironically, we learn too late that Othello would have chosen just such a world as that described by Emilia, given the opportunity. He seems to suggest, in Act 5, Scene 2 (145-147), that for Desdemona to have been true to him would have required the building of an alternative world, strictly under his control: "If heaven would make me such another world / Of one entire and perfect chrysolite."

Most importantly, Desdemona's failure to fulfill her charter will affect what history will be recounted and thus, Othello's final confes-

sion is affected by her earlier one. In his final words, he must acknowledge that their alliance was based on a private, non-heroic desire. Even Othello's feeble attempts to be heroic in forcing her to a deathbed confession is not enough to undo a pact based on desire. The only way for Othello to participate in an act of high *anagnoresis* is if he recognizes his union with Desdemona as being in error. But as his own suicidal confession makes clear, his remorse concerns the fact that he has lost Desdemona, not that he has desired her.[15] The union based on their mutual desire for each other is what has proved incompatible with the advancement of State purposes, not Othello's lack of judgement in the killing of Desdemona. Othello is simply playing out his desire to its inevitable end.

Othello's capacity to achieve a moment of high *anagnoresis*, thus fulfilling the requirements of the true Aristotelian tragedy, are destroyed by his complicity with Desdemona, who is innocent but truly desirous. Acceptance of such a character within the larger context of Shakespearian characterization is an indication of a crumbling world. It is also the kind of characterization which will prompt Benjamin to say, in his article defining Brecht's epic theater, that some Shakespeare scenes are the "roadside moments" in the West's journey from the Greek tragedy to the "untragic hero."[16] But this is the world that simultaneously announces itself as the new world, the world of the new science, the alternative world born at the crossroads between the Medieval dismantling and the rise of the Renaissance-Baroque epoch. In other words, Othello, like Desdemona, is not evil. He is weak with individual desire. And desire is not error, it is part of the new order of things.

Othello is of a lower stature than the other tragedies in the Shakespearian corpus, and thus, serves as a strong example of the disintegration of *anagnoresis* amongst those works. Nonetheless, even *Hamlet* contains such a "roadside moment" in the entwined confessions of Claudius and Hamlet. Claudius's admission, in soliloquy, to the murder of his brother is first spoken in the form of a prayer and then negated as Claudius confesses to himself that he does not regard his desire for Gertrude as error, and therefore cannot repent for it (III,

iii, 66-67). In this context, he must answer to Heaven.

But what counts here, for my purposes, is that Claudius confesses to himself, in private, that he desires the Queen. He is simultaneously confessing to the King, since he is himself the King. Private desire becomes a matter of State. The conditions of the State have been built on private desire, which will remain a matter of State when Claudius later informs Laertes that he has not acted against Hamlet because to do so would be to go against the wishes of the Queen, and thus, against his own desires. "The Queen his mother lives almost by his looks, and for myself—my virtue or my plague, be it either which—she is so conjunctive to my life and soul that, as the star moves not but in his sphere, I could not but by her" (4.7.11-16).

Hamlet's dilemma, from the end of Act I onwards, is his recognition that high *anagnoresis* will not be possible. He equally faces two moments of low *anagnoresis*. The first moment comes when he looks at Fortinbras for the last time, a scene to which I will return in a moment. The second is in his conversation with Horatio where he sees himself as ready to fight. His case is quite similar to Galileo's in this moment. In this scene, In Act 5, Scene 2 (213-217), Hamlet, like Galileo, faces a "time out of joint" and like Galileo, he gives away this abyssal moment, which could result in freedom, to the authority of the Church. Hamlet's readiness is a confession that he recants on all he has devised and no longer accepts authorship for his attempts to set things right.

After long and arduous attempts to act in the face of his difficulties, he accepts the idea that he has been "defying augury" all this time. In keeping with the grounds of conflict established by Claudius, the pure desire evidenced in his prayerful confession, Hamlet here admits to Horatio that he has been acting out of desire, in defiance of any authority that could stem from church or state.

His admission, conditioned by Claudius's earlier confession, will alter what history can be told about his struggle with the state of Denmark. Similarly to the figure of Othello, he must suggest to Horatio that his story be "set right", but for Horatio to do so requires that he, Horatio, reveal publicly what Hamlet has earlier confessed pri-

vately, i.e., that he acted on the basis of his own desire and that there was nothing particularly noble about this process.

There can be three reactions to this reading of Hamlet's characterization. The first is that Shakespeare is anticipating the creation of the modern subjectivity; indeed, more than simply anticipating, he is creating characterization of the modern private individual. He is humanizing the heroic. This is the basis for a whole series of important critical texts which have been developed over the past twenty years or so in Literary Theory.[17] The second is that Hamlet's acceptance of Providence is perfectly in keeping with the notion of Christian tragedy, the aim of which is to reconcile Greek notions of Fate with Christian concepts of Providence. This instance could be seen as no more than the general conflict for Baroque dramatists who were faced with the task of reconciling the Greeks with their own age.

The third is that this interpretation is ungenerous to Hamlet's greatness, and that the pathos created for his situation more than outweighs the pettiness of his behavior in the end of the play. Yet, it is precisely in this unsympathetic vein that Brecht wants to unearth that which he sees as Shakespeare's anticipation in these moments of low *anagnoresis*. His own reading of Hamlet's character, in his *Short Organum for the Theater*, reads as follows:

> the young Hamlet is summoned by his warrior father's ghost to avenge the crime committed against him. After first being reluctant to answer one bloody deed by another, and even preparing to go into exile, he meets young Fortinbras at the coast as he is marching his troops to Poland. Overcome by his warrior-like example, he turns back and in a piece of barbaric butchery slaughters his uncle, his mother and himself, leaving Denmark to the Norwegian. These events show the young man, already somewhat stout, making the most ineffective use of the new approach to Reason which he has picked up at the University.[18]

Brecht chooses to focus on what I have referred to above as the

first instance of low *anagnoresis*, where Hamlet looks upon Fortinbras as if he, Hamlet, were a spectator to a classic revenge tragedy (4.4.30-70). Hamlet recognizes the beastliness of his reluctance to act in the face of his dead father's injunction. He recognizes that his failure to act is based in his own private desire, though he hesitates to define it precisely. Brecht's choice to read *Hamlet* in this kind of humanized way, rather than seeing him safely placed in the context of the Aristotelian tragic protagonist, is consistent with his choices concerning the Galileo character. He ends the passage cited above by saying that representing Hamlet's character in this way might interest the audience, because it is in this way that Hamlet's character could become a pedagogic device. Brecht's representations of Galileo's weak confessions, a type of representation already present though not fully exploited in Shakespeare, shows a full exploitation and, consequently, a continuity between the lesson anticipated in Shakespeare's treatment and Brecht's contemporary one.

Brecht's theoretical treatise on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is therefore not a critical study pure and simple, but an attempt to reveal what he will continue to perpetuate in the Galileo play, namely, that the structures of Shakespeare's characterization are the structures he needs in order to uncover the truths of the Baroque age, truths which must then be taught through the theater for a new age that he wants to create. This brings us back to the question of why Brecht wanted to use Galileo for his protagonist rather than Oppenheimer or Einstein. Galileo's recantation created the age in which Einstein and Oppenheimer act. Brecht the artist must go back to reconstitute that recantation in order to show its continuity with the new age in which we live.

The reconstitution is not enough. This is where the structures of Shakespearian characterization become important. Brecht, the theoretician, must go back to find in what way these structures can be recycled for the scientific age theater. Remnants of the Aristotelian must be rejected while decadent offshoots, such as the moments of low *anagnoresis* we have seen in *Othello* and *Hamlet*, must be cultivated.

Thus, Benjamin is right to assert that Brecht's focus in *Galileo* is on the pedagogic benefits of portraying Galileo as he does, and not

on the recantation in itself. Nonetheless, as I mentioned earlier, in the structuring of the play, the recantation is the scene which forces Brecht to keep going back to the play in order to re-write the pedagogic scenes, notably the penultimate scene, where Galileo must instruct Andrea on how to interpret his recantation. A study of the three versions reveals the most discrepancy with respect to this ending. In the early version, Galileo *acts* on the basis of his earlier recantation. In the American and subsequent version, he *instructs* on the basis of that recantation. Theory becomes performance.

In the case of all of the moments of low *anagnoresis* I have considered here, one individual confesses or gives over to the State, an admission of his/her own private desires. Private desires made public construct the worlds in which these characters will live hereafter. In the case of the Shakespeare characters, the alternative worlds constructed are devastating and catastrophic. This is in keeping with the ambiguity of Shakespeare's plays. Perhaps the *catharsis* experienced by the spectator keeps him/her from marrying on the basis of pure desire or from abuse of power, but it equally announces a world in which such vices have been condoned and used to undermine the heroic status of those touched by them.

The world created by Galileo's recantation is, as Brecht will insist, our world. Thus, he does not have to end his play with an image of devastation or chaos. He has only to set up his characterization such that his play can open up onto our world, which he views as being catastrophic. The play can then serve as a possible pedagogic device for constructing a better alternative world than the one which exists. If the spectator is tempted to draw parallels between the compromised scientist Galileo and the compromised scientist Oppenheimer, then Brecht's depiction of Galileo, according to the structure of low *anagnoresis* evidenced in the characters of Shakespeare, has served its purpose. Galileo does not need to be a hero; he needs to be recognized as having confessed to a weakness, a failing that cannot be erased. Until this happens, progress based on his works cannot really be regarded as a positive thing, because his recantation was an admission that he could not be heroic. Not only that, it was indeed a mis-

take because it irrevocably placed Science in the hands of authority. The extensive play on sight possibilities, such as the empowering of sight provided by the telescope, or the weakness of sight experienced by Galileo by the end of the play, further indicate that seeing, as recognition (or *anagnoresis*), is a thematic concern of the play.[19]

In short, as Galileo claims to Andrea, his recantation was a surrendering of knowledge to the abusive practices of the authorities. He equally claims that he has abused his profession and that he "must not be tolerated in the ranks of science."[20] He reinforces, through pedagogy, the idea that his recantation was weak and was not heroic. This theatrical piece for the new age reinforces the idea that the theater must abandon the need for heroes in the name of a study of the new age and its origins. In the progressive versions of *Galileo*, Galileo goes from redressing his wrongs by encouraging Andrea to smuggle his *Discorsi* out of his home and across the borders, to explaining his failings, to bemoan his faulty judgement in the last version. A short passage, written in English and never actually attached to the end of the play, appears in Brecht's notes on the play. It reads as follows: "Now the most we can hope for will be a race of ingenious dwarfs who can be hired for any purpose who will, as on islands, produce whatever their masters demand." One wonders if Brecht was thinking of the island in the *Tempest* or of the "island" on which he found himself when he no doubt wrote that, the "island" of Hollywood.[21]

Brecht's unfinished epilogue leaves off with the question, "What's the use of progress if it leaves behind mankind?" In wishing to contrast our situation with that of Brecht in the early to mid-twentieth century, I suppose some form of the same question could be asked concerning the uncertain future of Literature, of Theory, and of the Humanities. The question is rhetorical, but the answer is not. This is the difficulty.[22] Progress and the turn of the millenium are equally unconcerned with the future of the Humanities.

On the other hand, those of us at the School for the Humanities in Santiago last year seemed very concerned. Perhaps Brecht's lesson can be instructive in this context. In studying the forms of low *anagnoresis* inherent to a crumbling tradition, i.e., the demise of high tra-

gedy which is anticipated in Shakespeare's works, Brecht manages to create a new theater for a new age. He does so by exploring *anagnoresis*'s disintegration to its logical end. If students of Literature and even Theorists find their subject matter disintegrating in the face of the millenium, it behooves us to explore the births and deaths of that subject matter to their logical ends, in the hopes that what is revealed or confessed, can give way to an alternative world worth having.

NOTES

[1] My focus will be on the American version of the play, which was written by Charles Laughton and Brecht in 1945-46 in Hollywood and performed in Hollywood and New York. Gter Rohrmoser's article "Brecht's Galileo" translated by J.F. Sammons (based on an excerpt in *Das deutsche Drama vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart*, edited by Benno von Wiese (Dusseldorf: August Bagel Verlag, 1958) appears in *Brecht: Critical Essays*, edited by Peter Demetz (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1962) 117-26, is important for a discussion of the relationship between the three versions of the play.

[2] Section 16 mentions different kinds of *anagnoresis*, and specifies five lesser forms, *anagnoresis* through a) marks or traits; b) contrived recognitions on the part of the artist; c) *anagnoresis* through memory; d) reasoning and e) through faulty inference. He will then reassert the superiority of *anagnoresis*, such as is found in *Oedipus* or *Iphigeneia*. Throughout in this article, I will refer to the example given in Section 11 as high *anagnoresis*, though it is clear from the variety given, that *anagnoresis* is, in its essence, completely separable from that which it recognizes. In this way, Aristotle distinguishes the act *in itself*. I am relying on this separation in order to create links between Brecht and Shakespeare, though it is also possible to explore this separation within the Baroque period itself, as I have done previously, in my dissertation, *Staging Doubt: Baroque Characterization in Calderon and Other Seventeenth Century Playwrights* (Arbor, Michigan: UMI, 1992). When I refer to the Baroque, I am using the term in the sense of the early Seventeenth-century period only. For

my views on problematics of the term cf., my article "Literary History is a Dream: or, How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love Film" in *Discours social/ Social Discourse* (Montreal: McGill U, 1988). For an in-depth analysis of the issues in Aristotle's *Poetics*, cf., *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, edited by Amie Oksenberg Rorty, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992). The texts which were introduced in relation to Modernity and its roots, in the Giuseppe Mazzotta seminar at the inaugural session of the School for Humanities in Santiago, were the works of Hans Blumenberg, *The Genesis of the Copernican World*, translated by Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: MIT, 1987), *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, also translated by Robert Wallace (Cambridge: MIT, 1983), and Louis Dupre's *Passage to Modernity* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983). I am grateful for the chance to have looked at these books and to have had them pointed out to me in this context, though I was not able to have access to Blumenberg's original texts, which came out in 1966 and 1974, respectively. I should cite, in particular, the section in Blumenberg's Copernican text on Galileo, "Experiences with the Truth: Galileo" (386-429). It is also crucial to consider Fredric Jameson's recent text, *Brecht and Method* (London: Verso, 1998), for the problem of Brecht's method and the modernity concept.

[3] In "Heavenly Food Denied: Life of Galileo" by Darko Suvin, which appears in the *Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, edited by Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks (New York: Cambridge UP, 1994), 141-52, Suvin's method of breaking down and analyzing Brecht's language as a way of speculating on his theoretical intentions in the process of constructing the play in its various versions is consistent with what I am positing, i.e., that Brecht intends for his theoretical position to be completely deducible from the language, gestures and performance of the play. This is also evident in the meticulousness with which he writes about how the part of Galileo should be performed in the *Short Organum* and in the piece entitled "Building up a Part: Laughton's Galileo" in *Brecht on Theatre: Development of an Aesthetic*, translated by John Willett (London: Methuen, 1964) 163-68; *Galilei-Aufbau einer Rolle*, East Berlin, 1956-58. The *Short Or-*

ganum is obviously structured according to Brecht's sense of what Bacon was trying to accomplish in the *New Organum*, though to follow this completely is outside the scope of this paper.

[4] Walter H. Sokel in his article "Brecht's Split Characters and his Sense of the Tragic" in *Brecht: Critcal Essays* edited by Peter Demetz (Engelwood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1962) 127-37, has to be concerned with this problem in an era where generic studies were somewhat more entrenched than they are today. His article will not go so far as to dismiss the importance of the decision about Brecht's play as a tragedy or anti-tragedy, but he clearly establishes the importance of taking Brecht's theoretical work with the notion of tragedy seriously in his construction of the Galileo character.

[5] Useful texts to consider on this point are Michelle Gellner's *Tragedy and Theory: The Problem of Conflict Since Aristotle* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1988); and Timothy Reiss's *Tragedy and Truth: Studies in the Development of a Renaissance and Neoclassical Discourse* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1980).

[6] "Well, this age of ours turned out to be a whore, spattered with blood. Maybe, new ages look like blood-spattered whores. Take care of yourself" (Scene 13). My citations are from the English version by Charles Laughton and Brecht, edited by Eric Bentley (New York: Grove, 1966) 124.

[7] The article, "Writing the Truth: Five Difficulties," is found in Appendix A of the Bentley edition of *Galileo* (133-150). It is translated by Richard Winston and originally appeared in *Unsere Zeit* 8.2-3 (1935): 23-4.

[8] "Studies of the first Scene of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*," in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. John Willett (London: Methuen, 1964) 252-65, is taken from the "Studium des ersten Aufrits in Shakespeares Coriolan" *Versuche* 15 (1957). The work on Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* occupied Brecht up until his death and began to be a subject of intense interest after his completion of the third version of the Galileo play. His translation of *Coriolanus* is in St. Luke IX, 1959. In this short dialogue, Brecht is actively engaged in deconstructing the char a cterization effected by Shakespeare,

seeing how it can be "amended" or redirected, without totally misrepresenting Shakespeare's original text. He is exploring what Shakespeare's character anticipates for the characterization of his own time. Darko Suvin's chapter, "Brecht's *Coriolan*, or Leninism as Utopian Horizon: The City, the Hero, the City That Does Not Need a Hero" in *To Brecht and Beyond*, (Brighton: Harvester, 1984) 185-207, is a crucial text for looking at the links between Brecht's Galileo character and his late study of Shakespeare's characterization.

[9] For references to Shakespeare in relation to the *Galileo* play, cf., "Kleines Organon fur das Theater" *Versuche* 12, 1953 reprinted in *Brecht on Theater: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. John Willett, (London: Methuen, 1964) 179-205. Conceived as a treatise on the development for a new aesthetic, the piece serves as a theoretical companion piece to Galileo, and ends with a review of Hamlet's story in relation to Brecht's building of the part of Galileo. The precise analysis of Laughton's role in the American process of creating Galileo is recounted in "Building Up a Part: Laughton's Galileo" also in *Brecht on Theatre*, 163-168. This section was originally published as *Galilei-Aufbau einer Rolle*, East Berlin, 1956-58.

[10] The various notes by Brecht on the writing of the play *Galileo* are collected in Werner Hecht's *Materialien zu Brechts "Leben des Galilei,"* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968) and reprinted in excerpts in *Brecht: Collected Plays*, Volume 5, ed. Ralph Mannheim and John Willett (New York: Vintage, 1972) 213-305. In these notes, Brecht will himself specify that *Galileo* is not a tragedy and that the church is to be regarded simply as a form of authority in the play. As stated in one section, "Modern Science is the legitimate daughter of the church, a daughter who has emancipated herself and turned against the mother . . . Since science was a branch of theology, the church is the intellectual authority, the ultimate scientific court of appeal. But it is also the temporal authority, the ultimate political court of appeal. The play shows the temporary victory of authority, not the victory of the priesthood. It corresponds to the historical truth in that the Galileo of the play never turns directly against the church" (216-17).

[11] Brecht notes that "from the point of view of the theater, the

question will arise whether the *Life of Galileo* is to be presented as a tragedy or as an optimistic play." He will go on to say that the play is not constructed according to the rules which would necessitate that the end of the play carry a greater weight (i.e., reveal a tragic situation). It is simply about the dawn of a new age and "tries to correct some of the prejudices about the dawn of the new age"; in *Brecht: Collected Works*, Volume 5, edited by Ralph Mannheim and John Willett (New York: Vintage, 1972) 216.

[12] Mannheim and Willett 226.

[13] German publication in *Unsere Zeit* 8.2-3 (1935), reprinted in Laughton's version of *Galileo*, ed. Eric Bentley (New York: Grove, 1966) 133-50. Bentley decides to include the essay in his edition of Laughton and Brecht's *Galileo* because the article is clearly a theoretical piece related directly to the intentions of the play. He bases this on the lines, "Rulers have an intense dislike for significant changes. They would like to see everything remain the same—for a thousand years. They would love it if the sun and moon stood still" (148). Inversely, one can see lines in the play that echo the sentiments of the essay, such as "As much of the truth gets through as we push through," spoken by Galileo to the Little Monk, who is in the service of the church because it is best for his family (Bentley 85). The essay, "Writing the Truth" concerns the procedures needed to make the truth palatable or attractive enough to be pushed through.

[14] The critical literature on *Othello* has been voluminous in the past ten years, particularly in relation to the questions of cultural hegemony inherent in the conflicts of the plot. My reasons for choosing this example originally had to do with the status of *Othello* as a domestic tragedy, hence a tragedy which can better demonstrate the compromises in the concept of *anagnoresis* introduced by Shakespeare. Since beginning this paper, I have been able to read Eric Griffin's article "Unsainting James: or, Othello and the 'Spanish Spirits' of Shakespeare's Globe" in *Representations* 62 (1998) 58-99, wherein he seeks to complexify the question of how the play *Othello* demonstrates tensions between the dominant culture and those which it seeks to dominate. He establishes a kind of multicultural tension un-

derlying the surface self-other conflicts controlling the play, and takes the anxiety of English's attempts to establish its national identity as a crucial subtext of the play. In particular, his assertion of the relation between Iago's name, and Santiago, as an added foreign cultural influence in *Othello*, for which he establishes a past history, is quite convincing. While I agree with his suggestion that it is reductive to refer to the Moor as a kind of overarching "Other," I will do so in this context, since my concern is with Desdemona's sense of what she is conquering when she succeeds in her marriage to Othello. I have also curtailed extensive commentary on issues raised in this and other recent articles, since I would like to position my reading of Desdemona within the context of my reading of Brecht's study of Shakespeare and his own new aesthetic only. Cf., also in a broader cultural context, Barbara Everett's "Spanish Othello: The Making of Shakespeare's Moor," in *Shakespeare Survey* 35 (1982), and for a very solid overview on recent writings on *Othello*, Anthony Gerard Barthelemy's *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's Othello* (New York, 1994).

[15] As T.S. Eliot suggested, in his essay, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," Othello is simply feeling sorry for himself. His regret constitutes an aesthetic rather than moral stance. Despite the fact that Eliot is somewhat apologetic about offering this reading, I think the case can be made. The essay is found in *Elizabethan Essays* (New York: Haskell House, 1964) 39.

[16] In the article, "What is Epic Theatre?" in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969) 149. Benjamin further asserts in this section, that Galileo's recantation is not the main subject of the play, but rather, the figure of Galileo as a new kind of pedagogue, a pedagogue who shows the links between teaching and propaganda. I would still maintain that the recantation has to be the most complicated action of the Galileo figure in order for this shift towards pedagogy and propaganda to be established. Of course, my point concerning the destruction of Othello's high *anagnoresis* is arguable, and I would be the first to admit that one can read *Othello* as an Aristotelian tragedy on this point. But my main concern is with tendencies, i.e., places where one might begin, if one wanted to dis-

mantle such heroic notions as high *anagnoresis*. Othello, through Desdemona, seems a perfect example of such a place.

[17] Notably, Joel Fineman's *The Subjectivity Effect in the Western Literary Tradition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT, 1991) and his *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye: The Invention of Subjectivity* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1982); Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984).

[18] In *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. John Willett (London: Methuen, 1964) 202.

[19] Darko Suvin's "Heavenly Food Denied: Life of Galileo" in, edited by Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks (New York: Cambridge UP, 1994) 141-52 explores all of the language in the play which highlights this concern for sight. Because of my focus on the relation of Shakespeare to Brecht, any consideration of Galileo as he appears in his own texts and Brecht's representation of him has been placed outside the scope of this paper. Cf., *Siderius Nuncius or Sidereal Messenger* by Galileo Galilei, trans. Albert Van Helden, (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1989) for Galileo's own text on the invention of the telescope. Stillman Drake's book, *Galileo at Work: His Scientific Biography* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978) is also a useful reference to use in considering Brecht's choices in representing the Galileo figure.

[20] *Galileo*, edited by Eric Bentley (New York: Grove, 1966) 124.

[21] Taken from Brecht's archives and reprinted in Schumacher's *Drama und Geschichte* (1965). Also reprinted in *Brecht: Collected Works*, Volume 5, ed. Ralph Mannheim and John Willett (New York: Vintage, 1972) 305.